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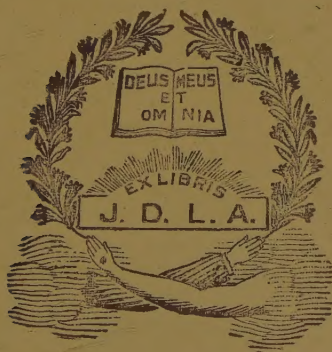
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# HISTORICAL PAPERS

Vol. IV.

EDITED BY

THE REV. SYDNEY F. SMITH, S.J.



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## PREFACE.

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THE present volume adds four more papers to the Historical Series. The first deals with a theory excogitated by the late Dr. Littledale, which is of importance only because it has been much insisted on by Anglican controversialists, but the examination of which affords an opportunity of explaining some interesting points in the history of Papal elections. The second and third papers inquire into the accuracy of statement of a writer who, with a reputation for scholarship acquired in other fields, has lately entered the lists as an assailant of the Catholic Church. The third paper also shares in character with the fourth, since they both furnish materials for judging by what right the two famous reformers of morals—Savonarola and Grosseteste—have been claimed as Harbingers of the Protestant Reformation.

SYDNEY F. SMITH, S.J.

*31 Farm Street,  
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# CONTENTS.

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	<i>page</i>
XVIII. DR. LITLEDALE'S THEORY OF THE DISAPPEAR- ANCE OF THE PAPACY . . . . .	I
By the Rev. Sydney F. Smith, S.J.	
XIX. DEAN FARRAR ON THE OBSERVANCE OF GOOD FRIDAY . . . . .	41
By the Rev. Herbert Thurston, S.J.	
XX. SAVONAROLA AND THE REFORMATION . . . . .	65
By the Very Rev. J. Procter, O.P.	
XXI. ROBERT GROSSETESTE, BISHOP OF LINCOLN . . . . .	127
By Mgr. W. Croke Robinson.	



## Dr. Littledale's Theory of the Disappearance of the Papacy.

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BY THE REV. SYDNEY F. SMITH, S.J.

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PROBABLY not a few on reading the title of this tract, will be perplexed by it. Disappearance of the Papacy! they will say, Why surely the Papacy is still with us. The Pope is still one of the most palpable and potent figures on the world's stage, one towards whom goes out from the hearts of vast numbers a loyalty unsurpassed if paralleled on earth, one towards whom goes out also an antipathy perhaps equally without earthly parallel, one whom, whether they venerate him or hate him, all must take into account. How then can any man in his senses think that the Papacy has disappeared?

There is ground for this astonishment at Dr. Littledale's theory, and it may cause some to think the subject not worthy of serious attention. Still the theory of continuity is equally absurd in itself. Surely no position is more hopeless than the position which undertakes to prove that, before the Reformation, the Divine institution of the Papacy was not an article of faith in England. But, none the less, Catholic writers have found it necessary to deal with at length, and even with reference to minute details, this utterly hopeless anti-Catholic thesis; and so in like manner does it seem desirable to deal with

Dr. Littledale's theory of the disappearance of the Papacy. For the aim of a Catholic writer in dealing with controversial subjects should be always apostolic. He should consider not so much what difficulties another ought to feel as what difficulties he does feel; and there can be no doubt that many Anglican minds are impressed by the speciousness of Dr. Littledale's reasoning. Hence a short examination of this extraordinary theory and of the arguments by which it is recommended may prove not uninteresting.

Let us allow Dr. Littledale to state his case in his own words. The book in which he enters into it most fully is his *Petrine Claims*, where it is the subject-matter of some fifty pages.<sup>1</sup>

Let us assume for a moment [he tells us], though in the teeth of all Scripture and history, that the doctrine of the Petrine privilege is true, that St. Peter was given infallible and sovereign jurisdiction over the whole Church Catholic, that he was Pope of Rome, that he conveyed his privileges indefeasibly to the Popes who succeeded him, and that the successor of the Fisherman is the supreme ruler and teacher of Christians, the one Vicar of Christ on earth, whose single word is "the living voice of the Church," infallible and paramount. Even so, something further is essential; the Pope who claims these august privileges must be Pope *de jure* as well as *de facto*. . . . It is an axiom of Latin theology and canon law, that unlawful possession of the Papacy confers no rights whatever, and that all acts done by one who is Pope *de facto* without being also Pope *de jure* are null and void.

So far there is no occasion to take exception to Dr. Littledale's premisses, nor need we object to the inference which immediately follows.

<sup>1</sup> P. 306.

This nullity extends, of course, to the institution of all beneficiaries within the area of the quasi-Pope's domestic jurisdiction, and to the creation of Cardinals.

But then, continues our ingenious critic, see to what you are led. If a Pope should be invalidly elected and the Cardinals appointed by him be in consequence invalid also, it follows that a "false Pope may seriously affect the competency of the electoral body which will have to choose his successor." Not only may this happen, but, according to Dr. Little-dale, it has happened, and that often. Many a time have Popes, destitute of any lawful title, held possession of the See of Rome, and during their tenure appointed Cardinals, who, being so appointed, could in their turn have no valid title to elect future Popes.

That this is the painful truth our critic then goes on to establish. And first he calls attention to the sources of nullity, by which, according to the express doctrine of the canonists, the *de facto* tenure of the Papacy may be affected. Six sources of nullity, he tells us, are beyond dispute. Those are not true Popes who have been intruded by external violence in spite of, or even without the concurrence of, the electors; or who have been elected by persons not qualified to elect; or who have been elected by votes simoniacally procured; or who at the time of election were affected by some personal ineligibility, such as bastardy, or heresy previous to election; or who have lost a previously valid title either by subsequently falling into heresy, or by being guilty of non-residence. And in case these alleged sources of nullity in a claimant to the Papacy should not be far-reaching enough in their effects to satisfy the sweeping

demands of his theory, Dr. Littledale takes note, that, according to an "accepted maxim of Latin theology," doubtful Popes are to be regarded as no Popes at all.

The conclusion he draws from this "accepted maxim," is that he is not bound to prove for certain that any portion of the two hundred and fifty Popes usually accounted such, were invalidly elected, but that he will have attained his end if only he can bring together a series of charges of intrusion, simony, &c., against a sufficiently imposing number of Popes; for if there are charges, so he invites us to reason on the basis of the aforesaid maxim, there is a probability of their truth, and probability is enough to divest the persons charged of their claim to constitute links in the chain of succession. I trust I have made clear Dr. Littledale's contention, which we may now word compendiously thus: All doubtful Popes are to be taken as no Popes at all, and therefore as flaws in the succession; and all Popes are to be taken as doubtful against whom any writer or writers have brought a charge of intrusion, simony, &c. This last proposition is not, indeed, explicitly stated by Dr. Littledale, but it is what he implies, and what underlies his arguments throughout.

Having thus laid down his principles, or rather, having thus laid down principles which he assures us are those of the Roman canon law, this writer proceeds to apply them to the records of Papal history. We shall have occasion in the course of our investigation to refer more in detail to these historical applications, but for the present it will be enough to summarize his results which he exhibits in a table

at the end of *The Petrine Claims*. According to this table, out of the two hundred and nineteen Popes whose names are set down in the lists as having occupied the Chair of St. Peter previously to 1536, the date of the death of Clement VII., sixty-five must be eliminated as spurious—eight as having been heretics, fourteen as having been simoniacally appointed, twenty-three as having been intruded into the See by secular powers, four as having been irregularly elected, six as having been non-resident, ten as having been promoted by an election of doubtful, and nine by an election of disputed, validity.<sup>1</sup> But why stop at 1536, we naturally inquire, and the answer is, that from that date Dr. Littledale conceives the succession to the Papacy to have lapsed altogether. Alexander VI. and Julius II. were simoniacally elected, and yet Julius II., by his Bull *Quum tam divino* (1503), “pronounces all simoniacal elections to the Papacy void, and incapable of being validated by any recognition accorded to the Pope as chosen, and Gammarus, Auditor of the Rota, in his commentary on the Bull, alleges it to be so worded as to be retrospective in effect, fully voiding all such former elections.” Hence, since, after the death of Julius II. and still more after that of Clement VII., there was no longer a single Cardinal living whose appointment had proceeded from a valid Pope, there were none then living, and never again could be any living, qualified to elect a true Pope, and all subsequent Popes not having received the votes of qualified electors must be deemed spurious.

<sup>1</sup> These numbers when added up make seventy-four. But against a few Popes double grounds of nullity are charged.



Here is Dr. Littledale's indictment, and perhaps some may think it effective. "At the very least," some one may be inclined to say, "it places me under the necessity of a complicated historical inquiry, altogether beyond my powers; for until I have investigated all these historical cases, how can I know for certain that the Pope who now rules the Church is a true Pope, and how, as a matter of necessary consequence, can I know that the Church which adheres to him is the true Church?"

But such fears are needless. We shall, indeed, take some useful dips into history, and with the result of understanding better how much our ingenious critic has run astray. Still for all practical purposes it is not necessary to dip into history at all. The principle just enunciated, that the Church which adheres to a false Pope can only be a false Church, so far from offering us increased motive for alarm, indicates the secure and easy path out of the maze prepared for us. It is true that a Church which adhered to a false Pope could not be a true Church, and why is this, save because the true Church cannot adhere to a false Pope? But if this is so, since we know on certain and quite independent grounds which is the true Church, we have only to ask ourselves in reference to any particular Pope—either the living Pope whom we are called upon to obey, or some past Pope in whom we are historically interested—whether the true Church adheres or adhered to him, or not, and then we can be sure at once, independently of all detailed historical investigations, whether the title by which he entered upon the See of Peter was valid or not. And so likewise if we find that the true



Church has separated itself entirely from any claimant to the Papacy, we have at once in this easily obtained knowledge, the certainty that such a claimant had not a valid title to the See. The only cases to which the application of this principle is not helpful are those of Popes whose reigns were so short that the Church Universal had hardly time to give distinct signs of adherence or rejection, or those (likewise short-lived) of whose lives the extant records are too scanty to show clearly whether the Church regarded them as legitimate or as intruders. But these exceptions are few and unimportant. Of the vast majority of individual Popes, and still more of the line of Popes, reaching not merely up to the sixteenth century, but to our own days, it is absolutely clear that they received that loyal adherence and obedience from the Universal Church which Leo XIII. receives now, and which of itself is so sure a sign of the legitimacy of his title that we can even make it the matter of an act of faith that he is the true Vicar of Jesus Christ.

This is no mere theory, but the common doctrine of Catholic theologians, as will appear sufficiently from the following passage in Ferraris' *Bibliotheca*, a work of the highest authority. In his article on the Pope,<sup>1</sup> Ferraris says :

It is *of faith* that Benedict XIV., for instance, legitimately elected and accepted as such by the Church, is the true Pope—(common doctrine among Catholics). This is proved from the Council of Constance, *sess. ult.* where Martin V. Const. *Inter Cunctos*, decrees that those who return from heresy to the faith shall be asked, among other

<sup>1</sup> S.v. *Papa*, p. 949.

points, "Whether they believe that the Pope canonically elected, for the time being, his name being expressly mentioned, is the successor of St. Peter, having supreme authority in the Church of God." For thereby he supposes it to be an article of faith, since those who abjure heresy are "interrogated only as to truths of faith."

It will be said, "Yes, but he speaks only of a Pontiff canonically elected and as such accepted by the Church, and his authority cannot therefore be quoted for the case of one whose canonical election is called in question." This, however, is an objection which Ferraris himself anticipates, and he meets it thus :

Through the mere fact that the Church receives him as legitimately elected, *God reveals to us the legitimacy of his election*, since Christ has promised that His Church shall never err in a matter of faith, . . . whereas she would err in such matter of faith if the conclusion did not hold ; since the Church in acknowledging the elect to be the true Pope, acknowledges him as an infallible rule of faith, while (if he were not really the true Pope) he would be fallible, &c.

The Church, then, cannot err in recognizing her Head. She can neither adhere to a spurious head, nor separate herself from the true Head. The grounds for this proposition have been indicated to us by Ferraris, but it may be useful to expand his account of them a little more fully. By the terms of the fundamental promises of our Lord to His Church she is guaranteed two prerogatives—indefectibility and immunity from error, together with the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, overruling the movements of hearts and minds and the course of events, in order to secure for her the continuance of these two prerogatives. Now the Pontificate is an essential

element in the Church's constitution. If, therefore, the Pontificate were to lapse, the Church would be sustaining a loss in her essentials and so reveal herself as not indefectible. And again, the Church is preserved from religious error by her reliance on the infallible voice of her Supreme Pastor. But if she could err by failing to discriminate between her true Head and a counterfeit, with the result of adhering to the latter, she would be hopelessly exposed to the risk of erring in religious doctrine through receiving it from wrong and unaided lips.

And here let us bear in mind that Dr. Littledale cannot say to us, "Yes, but all this implies that yours is the true Church—which is what I deny." He cannot say this, because he has granted this much for the sake of argument, undertaking, *even on the assumption* of our Church being the true Church, to show that the continuity and continuance of the Papal line cannot be held as genuine. Nor, as has been remarked, do we merely assume the truth of our Church. We prove it by solid, ample, and convincing arguments. Of course to deal with this proof in its generality would be out of place here. But it will not be out of place, since it will tend to render clearer the force of the principle, "He is the true Pope who is recognized by the true Church," if I indicate concisely the outlines of one line of proof by which we establish the truth of the Church which looks to the See of Peter as its necessary centre of unity.

Cardinal Newman has written :

The Church authenticates herself to be the Church by her Notes. It is the great Note of an ever-enduring *cætus*

*fidelium*, with a fixed organism and unity of jurisdiction, a political greatness, a continuity of existence, in all places and times, a suitableness to all classes, ranks, and callings, an ever-energizing life, an untiring, ever-evolving history, which is her evidence that she is the creation of God, and the representative and home of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

This is in fact an argument from the Notes in which we profess belief when we recite the Nicene Creed—One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. As Notes they mark the living Church, being her unique and visible endowment, by the possession of which she is distinguished from all other claimants. Their value lies just in this, that, whilst we behold them and ponder upon them, we are led to the conviction that their realization in the Church which bears them is nothing less than a moral miracle, so impossible is it for human beings, so numerous and varied in their intellectual and other characteristics, unless aided by some overruling Divine power, to preserve themselves in unity so close, so widespread, so abiding, and so spiritual; and being led to this conviction, we find ourselves in the possession of a convincing proof of the truth of the Catholic Church and of her claims, independent of, though powerfully aided by, the deeper study of history, past and present.

A line of reasoning like this, which is after all the primary line of reasoning by which we are all held in the Church, or brought to the Church, carries right down to the solid bed rock of self-evident principles the justification of our suggested mode of dealing with Dr. Littledale's historical and canonical cavils.

<sup>1</sup> *Essays Critical and Historical*. Note on Essay ix. p. 88.

But it is worth observing that, just as the Papacy is an essential element in the Catholic Church, so these notes which characterize the Church and mark her out as Divine, in their degree and measure attach also directly to the Papacy. I have imagined one reading the title of this tract to say, "Disappearance of the Papacy! why it is one of the most palpable figures on the world's stage." And one who made that reflection would have in mind, not the bare fact that a well-known succession of ecclesiastics, calling themselves and called by others, Popes of Rome, still continues in the world. Rather he would have in mind the quality of this fact, the continuance in this modern line of Popes of the special and striking features which have characterized the Papal line from the beginning; he would have in mind their bold claims to universal spiritual jurisdiction, combined with the astounding fact that so many drawn out of such diverse countries and races respond to the claim with a loyal and fervent obedience; he would have in mind how the effect of this response has been to preserve the numbers who make it in a unity of faith and communion so striking and so edifying, a unity the significance of which is rendered the more manifest by the conspicuous contrast which it offers to the continuous disintegration of all other religious bodies; he would have in mind the power displayed by the Papacy, modern as well as ancient, to fertilize the vast communion over which it presides with noble thoughts, heroic enterprises, and beneficial institutions; he would have in mind the vigour and tenacity of life which the Papacy still continues to exhibit, thereby

offering a most perplexing problem to the non-Catholic who measures its material weakness against the political combinations, the mighty armies, the fierce and relentless hatreds, which are arrayed against it. It is with all this before his eyes that he will have exclaimed, "Disappearance of the Papacy! why there it is as much as it ever was," and he will have only shown his sound logic and his common sense, when, with this slightly impatient exclamation, he has brushed aside Dr. Littledale's cobwebs. Indeed to invite us whose eyes look on the living Papacy, to disbelieve in its existence on the faith of some doubtful historical reasoning about obscure occurrences long since past, is as if some one were to invite us who breathe English air and walk on English soil, to believe England to be a pre-historic country buried long centuries since beneath the ocean, just because this is the conclusion to which he has been led by some hazardous geological reasonings from what is known, or suspected, of the past state of our globe.

So far this tract has had to be theological rather than historical, but now we can pass over to the field of historical inquiry. We have found secure grounds for our confidence that Dr. Littledale cannot have discovered a break or collapse in the line of Popes, and we may be sure, therefore, that he has followed some radically false line of reasoning if it has led him to an opposite conclusion. Still he tells us the principles of our own canon law have guided him to his conclusion, and it will be interesting to see how it is that they have led him so far astray. We shall not indeed be able to deal fully with the many cases



he brings forward ; but we can deal with them sufficiently to enable us to judge how far he has a just claim to the designation of "canonist" which he always delighted to ascribe to himself.

It will be necessary to start with a very slight account of the changes through which the prescribed mode of electing a Pope has passed in the course of centuries. As our Lord did not Himself determine how vacancies in the Pontificate should be filled up, the certain inference is that He left the determination to the Church, and therefore to the Pope. For such a power was clearly necessary for the well-being of the Church, which would require progressive adaptation of the mode of appointment to the circumstances of the different periods, and if the power, being necessary, exists in the Church, it must reside in the person of the Pope. The Popes accordingly have not hesitated from time to time to employ it. In the earliest ages the right of election belonged to the clergy of the local Roman Church, the laity also having a recognized right to signify their approval. The object of this intervention of the laity was clearly to bespeak a more favourable reception of the new Pontiff from his immediate flock, but in course of time the practice led to serious evils. The laity could differ among themselves as well as agree, and could emphasize their divergencies of opinion by popular disturbances. It was also natural that nobles, officials, governors, &c., should claim to be the proper representatives of the people and should arrogate to themselves a right of very effective interference. It was natural too that the Roman Emperors, and later those who claimed a

succession to their rights, should assume that this right along with others had passed over to them. There were times when this civil intervention in Papal elections was of great service, and it was in recognition of this that Leo III. (800) awarded to the Emperor Charlemagne the office of *advocatus ecclesiæ*, an office which authorized him to intervene for the sake of securing liberty of action to the electors. But too often what happened was that worldly-minded sovereigns converted the right of intervention into an instrument for forcing upon the Church Supreme Pastors not fitted for the high office. Hence it was that the Popes struggled so hard in the middle ages to relieve themselves of the incubus, and here the name of Gregory VII. stands out as that of one who achieved a signal success in the work of liberation. Another change more directly affecting the mode of election was made by Nicholas II. (1059). Till then the relative importance of the votes of the clergy and of the approbation of the people had not been clearly determined, and many disputes arose out of this obscurity. Nicholas restricted the power of election to the Cardinal Bishops. To them the definitive voice should henceforth belong; the other Cardinals, the clergy, and the people, being left only the duty of signifying assent to the choice of the former. A century later (1178), Alexander III. enlarged a franchise which was found too narrow. It was he who first gave it equally to all the three orders of Cardinals, to the Cardinal Bishops, Cardinal Priests, and Cardinal Deacons; and he likewise prescribed that a majority consisting of two-thirds of the electors present should be decisive, whatever plea might be

urged to the contrary (*absque ulla exceptione*). The effect of this last clause was to abolish all, or almost all, ineligibility from personal disqualifications. It is held that it allows the choice to fall even on a layman, or even on a married man—the object of the clause being to reduce as much as possible the occasions of dispute. Thus many points were decided, but it still remained open to the electors to make their choice in any way they pleased, by meeting together in council, by letters or proxies, or even by tacit assent to appointments imposed on the Church from without. In 1274, Gregory X. put an end to all this by prescribing that henceforth elections should be made in conclave. This was a most valuable measure. A conclave is a kind of retreat. It reduces largely the possibility of undue motives actuating the electors, by shutting them off from the influences of the outside world, and by reminding them forcibly of God's presence, at the solemn moment when they are to record their votes. It has also tended powerfully to stop the long delays which had sometimes characterized previous elections. Other changes of great wisdom and importance have been made since the days of Gregory X., but there is no need to describe them. What has been said is enough for our present purposes. It will give us the key to many of Dr. Littledale's fallacies, and it will show us how hard and how wisely the Popes have struggled to secure the election of their successors from miscarriage through sin and worldliness.

Now at last we can estimate the reasoning by which our amateur canonist has discovered so many flaws in the Papal Succession. Be it remembered

that he has against us a black list of invalid Popes, including sixty-five of the names before 1536, and all the names subsequent to it.

1. And in the first place, what is to be said of his statement that the principle, *Papa dubius, Papa nullus*, is an accepted "maxim of Latin theology," and applicable to all cases in which modern writers may fancy themselves to detect an historical doubt in an ancient Papal election? It must be answered that there are four distinct flaws in this portion of his reasoning.

(a) The principle of *Papa dubius est Papa nullus* is not a "maxim of Latin theology," but only the opinion of some Latin theologians, not even of the majority of them.

(b) The upholders of this principle never dreamt of understanding it, as Dr. Littledale has done, of mere literary doubts about the title of a Pope whom no one during his life resisted; nor did they mean it to be construed according to the strict sense of the words, but technically, as canonists, whose proficiency in their science has gone beyond Dr. Littledale's, would know. The case contemplated was that which arose through the so-called Great Schism in the Papacy during the fourteenth century, the case of two or more claimants to the Papacy existing, each supporting his claim by reasons of sufficient strength to defeat all attempts at solution by canonists or Councils. And the maxim, expressed, as legal maxims usually are, in epigrammatic form, meant not that any one was free to treat such claimants as spurious Popes, but that the doubt in their title availed to subject them to the authority of a General Council,

and to empower *it* to set them aside altogether, if the interests of Catholic unity should require it.

(c) At Pisa, where soon after its invention it was proposed for the first and, with the exception of Constance, the only time, to give practical effect to this maxim by deposing the two existing claimants, Gregory XII. and Benedict XIII., the Council did not fully trust to the proposal, but preferred rather to impart to its act of deposition a declaratory form, and base it on an imputation against Gregory and Benedict of heresy and schism whereby they had already dethroned themselves.<sup>1</sup> In like manner at Constance, where the schism was finally healed, it was not healed through any application of this maxim, but by the voluntary resignation of two claimants, and the general abandonment, by that time consummated, of the third, such abandonment, according to the principle we have already considered, being taken as a *sign* that Benedict could not be, or have ever been, a truly elected Pope.

(d) The maxim of *Papa dubius est Papa nullus* has the preponderance of evidence against it. The chief reason urged in its favour is that without it the Church might find herself without remedy, if the rival claimants to a disputed succession should persist in their refusal to resign. But the answer is, that God's special providence over His Church will see to this, as it did in the sole case of real difficulty which has arisen during these twenty centuries.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Littledale's strange and unscientific reading of this maxim being now set aside, the evidences of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Historical Papers*, No. XIII. *The Great Schism of the West*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ballerini, *De Pot. Eccles.* c. ix.

nullity which he has brought forward assume a different complexion. No mere statement of a few writers, even if contemporary, and no mere academic inferences from the principles of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, as our canonist conceives of them, are of any avail. He must furnish us with undeniable historical certainty in all the cases of invalidity on which he relies, or we are not obliged to listen to him. Now for the several causes of nullity.

2. Six Popes are charged with nullity because *non-resident*. They are the Popes who in the fourteenth century leaving Rome on account of the hindrance put in the way of their freedom of action by the Roman nobles, the Orsini, the Colonna, the Savelli, &c., took up their abode at Avignon, entrusting meanwhile the government of the Holy City to a Vicar.

This charge is almost too childish to receive a serious answer. Episcopal non-residence is in no case a fault involving *ipso facto* deposition; nor, if it were, could it have this effect in the case of a Pope, who, as supreme lawgiver of the Church, is not bound by the penalties of disobedience which he himself inflicts on others; nor is it possible for a Pope to be non-resident, the entire world forming the sphere of his immediate care and jurisdiction; nor again is non-residence a fault at all when it is, or seems to be, required in the interests of the freedom of ecclesiastical government.

We will, therefore, be so bold as to take the six Avignon Popes off Dr. Littledale's black list of sixty-five.

3. Next we find ten Popes set down as spurious



on the score of *doubtful election*. Of these, eight are made up out of the Popes during the aforesaid Great Schism, four Roman Popes, two Avignon Popes, and two Pisan Popes. This perhaps is hardly a fair way of making up a list, as the three lines were alternative. Still we can afford to be generous. As I have dealt with this subject in the tract already referred to, there is no need to enter into it here, further than to say that this was a doubt seen to at the time and sufficiently provided for. One thing is at least certain, that the validity of subsequent Popes was not affected by the state of temporary uncertainty, since at Constance they were careful so to arrange the settlement that every possibility of defect in the title of Martin V. should be demonstrably eliminated. Dr. Littledale, indeed, becoming ultra ultramontane for the moment, sets down Martin V. as "irregularly elected," because the electoral body was not composed of the Cardinals alone, but of these with certain Bishops, &c., added to their number. But as long as the Cardinals accepted the arrangement, which they did, no invalidity could arise from this source; and besides, they all agreed that the choice of each section should fall on the same person, which it did.

The other two Popes set down as doubtfully elected, are Formosus and Boniface VIII.: Formosus, because he was objected to as already tied to another see, that of Porto; Boniface VIII., because the power of his predecessor to resign the Papacy was disputed. But previous and subsequent usage in the Church have fully dispelled any doubts which might have been entertained by certain canonists on these two points. A Pope has the same right to

resign, if the general interests of the Church seem to him to demand the act, as he has under similar circumstances to sanction the resignation of another Bishop, and as much is to be said of translations to the Papacy from another see. Thus we may take ten more names off our canonist's list.

4. Next come nine cases of *disputed election*. Of these, one is that of the so-called Leo VIII., who was a clear intruder, and has always been regarded as such. He was appointed during the lifetime of the lawful Pope and in spite of him. The other eight are Popes against whom some rival claimant was started. Even apart from the theological certainty we have that the Church cannot adhere to a spurious Pontiff and reject the true, it is only rational to prefer the judgment of the contemporary Church to that of some modern writer attempting to decide between the obscure, scanty, and contradictory accounts which have been preserved to us. At the same time, in most cases we can ourselves see how the decision of the contemporary Church was on the side of truth, as in the case of St. Damasus, St. Boniface I., and Innocent II.

We can, therefore, take off the black list nine more names.

5. On the score of *intrusions* our canonist condemns twenty-three otherwise recognized Popes.

All save three of the cases he sets down as such are those of Popes of the ninth and tenth centuries, Popes of the iron age, as they have not inappropriately been termed. They form the most imposing feature in Dr. Littledale's list, because, so many of them occurring together, the suggestion is that for

more than a century, that is from 891 to 963, and again from 1012 to 1046, the Holy See was filled only by occupants who, as intruders, must have been without the prerogatives attaching to the Primacy.

(a) But it is clear Dr. Littledale, canonist though he is supposed to be, does not understand what is meant by an intruded Pope. And yet Baronius, whose authority he unjustifiably invokes for his statement about these tenth century Popes, should have taught him his error in one of the very passages to which appeal is made.

Now follows the year of our Lord, 897, of the fifteenth Indiction, in which Boniface (VI.), invading the See (of Rome), held it for fifteen days, a man whom we must not number among the Pontiffs, since he was condemned in the Roman Synod under John IX., as will be said in the proper place. He was a man of evil life who had been twice degraded, once from the diaconate, another time from his priesthood. Stephen VII. (VI.) was substituted in his place, Boniface the intruder being thus driven out by another intruder. All these deeds being wrought by force and terrorism, brought disgrace on the Roman Church. But although some of these, like this Boniface, were altogether rejected, others were afterwards received as Pontiffs. The reason of this was because, however much they owed their original occupation of the See to tyrannical violence, they were afterwards by fresh elections duly held elected as legitimate Pontiffs by the clergy, who deemed it better to tolerate them just as they were than to permit the Church to be torn by schism. This observation we are compelled to make because the Universal Catholic Church has venerated them and obeyed them as true Pontiffs, has recognized them as Vicars of Christ and successors of St. Peter, and has shown them the reverence due to genuine Pontiffs; a thing which would never have been done had there not been evidence of a subsequent legitimate election.

Possibly Baronius is too sanguine in assuming that the intrusion was ordinarily revalidated by a formal ceremony of election duly conducted, and indeed elsewhere he says that often this could not have been. But even if there were no formal ceremony, Baronius's principle would still apply. A tacit acceptance of the intrusion by the electors as distinguished from a persistent refusal to tolerate it, would have sufficed to rectify the original nullity of the title. In after-days, indeed, such a tacit acceptance would not have sufficed, because subsequent Papal legislation made election in Conclave with observance of special forms a condition of validity. But there was no such law in force in the tenth century, and had it been then in force, probably those with whom the power of election lay would have acted otherwise. There is thus, then, not much difficulty on this score, nor is Baronius wrong when he maintains that to ratify the title of these intruders may have been the most prudent course from the point of view of the interests of the Church. In our own days we see and understand a similar course followed by the rulers of the Church in dealing with the rulers of the world. Take, for instance, appointments to the French episcopate, where the Pope tolerates and accepts the nomination of a distinctly anti-Christian Government. He does it to avoid worse evils which might follow on refusal, and he does it in the knowledge that by a little prudent administration he can so work the system as to secure on the whole good and even excellent Bishops.

Such a reference to modern times may help us to

realize the position of the electors to the Papacy in the tenth century. The state of civil society at the time was almost inconceivably distracted. There were German and Italian Princes claiming the Imperial dignity, each in turn obtaining the upper hand, and whilst these contended among themselves, minor chieftains in the near neighbourhood of Rome were in similar manner fighting for the mastery. Thus "the Nationalists ruled there (at Rome) from 896 to 904; the Tuscan faction from 904 to 964; the German from 964 to 973; the Crescentian from 1003 to 1012; and the Tusculan from 1012 to 1046."<sup>1</sup> Each faction as it came to prevail in the Holy City endeavoured to force its nominees on the Roman clergy. It was a distressing condition of things, but on the whole we can see why the electors were justified in conferring a valid title on the intruders, and indeed we know in some instances, and may conjecture as to others, that the infringement of liberty was in the form of recommendation with threats in reserve, not of forcible intrusion without invoking the intervention of the electors. For questionable as was their mode of entrance into the See, and difficult as it is to separate the true from the false in the writers of the period, the balance of probabilities goes to show that most of these Popes were by no means bad men. John XII. and Benedict IX. do seem to have been thoroughly wicked; and Stephen VI. must have been not far removed from a barbarian; but these are almost the only Popes of

<sup>1</sup> *Manual of Church History.* By the Rev. T. Gilmartin, vol. i. p. 471. This useful little manual deserves mention as very suitable for the bookshelves of those interested in Church history.

the period against whom the charge of wickedness is conclusively proved. Luitprand, Bishop of Cremona, we know, brings very serious charges against Sergius III. and John X., which Baronius has accepted on his authority. But even if, with Father de Smet, we think Luitprand has been unfairly set down as a mere slanderer of his political adversaries, we must allow, as Father de Smet also does, that he (Luitprand) is often too credulous of events of which he had no personal experience, and must conclude, again with Father de Smet, that there are no sufficient grounds for believing the charges against Sergius III. and John X. to be either certainly or even probably true. We must not, however, digress too much. Our business is not with the morals of the tenth century Popes, but with their *status* as Popes. We are asked how far they were genuine or spurious. It is impossible now to go into details over so complicated a point, and it would be most unsafe to commit oneself definitively to any certain conclusions about so perplexing a period. But I submit that I have shown cause for putting out of court Dr. Littledale's unquestionably ill-considered statements on the other side. His duty was to make it *certain* that all these Popes were intruders. He has not even made it probable that they were intruders, in the sense of being intruders resisted to the end by the proper electors. As, then, his few other outlying cases of alleged intrusion not belonging to the tenth century series, yield to the application of precisely the same principles, we need not hesitate to take twenty-three more names off our canonist's black list.

6. Next we come to the eight cases of alleged



invalidity through *heresy*. The question, it should be observed, is not of heresy publicly taught, but of heresy privately held—which is, according to Dr. Littledale, and to a certain extent correctly, a disqualifying circumstance in a candidate for the Papacy. Two questions here arise—how far is it true that personal heresy in the individual Pope is a source of nullity, and what is the nature of the heresy which has this nullifying effect.

In regard to the first, we must distinguish *actual* heresy arising in one who is already Pope, and *past* heresy in a candidate for the Papacy. As regards *present* heresy it has been generally held that, given the possibility of a personally heretical Pope, he would *ipso facto* cease to be Pope by ceasing to be a member of the Church. The Church in that case, as represented by the Cardinals or otherwise, could on due information of the fact pass a declaratory sentence on one who being no longer Pope was no longer its superior, and then take measures to remove him from the See in which he had become an intruder. This doctrine, however, has, except in a single and doubtful instance, been always of an academic character, there never having been occasion to use it. The one exception has been already mentioned. It was when the Council of Pisa thought of utilizing the opinion in order to heal the Great Schism, by imputing constructive heresy to claimants who would not consult the interests of unity by resigning. In regard to *past* heresy as a disqualification in a candidate for the Papacy, we need only say that it did not exist as such until 1559, when Paul IV. issued his Bull *Cum ex apostolatus officio*, a Bull in

which the possibility of such a candidature for the Papacy is contemplated only inclusively with similar possibilities in regard to other sees, offices, and dignities, civil as well as ecclesiastical, throughout the world. A Bull of that date can have no concern for us in this tract. Certainly *since* then no suspicion of heresy in a Pope can be suggested. I know Dr. Littledale claims that the form of the Bull is retrospective, but that only shows his incompetency to deal with a legal document.

Now as to the other question, the question what is the nature of the heresy which thus disqualifies. Here it is necessary first to understand what the canonists mean by heresy, a piece of legal knowledge which our canonist does not seem to possess, but which another canonist shall tell us. Pichler writes as follows, "Heresy is the *voluntary* error against some truth of the Catholic faith held by a baptized person. In order that it may be *formal* (the kind we are concerned with), not material, there must be (1) *error*, or erroneous judgment, in the *intellect* about some truth of *faith*, (2) *obstinacy* in the will, whereby the person embraces this error about a truth of faith even after it has been sufficiently proposed to him and when he knows that the Universal Church defends it as revealed in Scripture or defined by the Church as an article of faith; and whereby the heretic prefers his own judgment to that of the Universal Church, the column of truth," &c.

Here are two conditions, the second, that of deliberateness in sinning against the light, being most essential. Before Dr. Littledale claimed to write down any of the Popes as heretics he should have brought

home to them this second condition as well as the first. As a matter of fact he does not succeed in bringing home even the first. The cases he mentions are, save two, most trivial. John XXII. was charged with holding an opinion which at that time was not defined, and which if he held it at all, he held with the usual reservations of submissiveness to the Church's teaching. Hormisdas, in a letter, discouraged the use of a phrase (*Unus de Trinitate passus est*), which is in itself orthodox, but was capable of being misused and was apparently intended to be misused. Zosimus, when two heretics, Pelagius and Cœlestius, publicly renounced their heresy before him and begged to be received back into communion, believed too credulously that they were speaking sincerely. Callistus I. was accused of an heretical opinion by a man who was his bitter opponent and perhaps an Antipope, and who is himself revealed by his own writings to be unorthodox ; whilst either Victor or Zephyrinus is said by Dr. Littledale, but incorrectly, to have been accused by Tertullian, when himself a heretic, of Patripassianism. These two last cases remind us of a certain Dr. Nicholson who some years back, in some public letters, demonstrated that Cardinal Manning was a heretic, and held Nestorian views on the Person of our Lord. This Anglican Doctor of Divinity completely satisfied himself as to the truth of his charge, but does not seem to have satisfied Catholics, who rather gathered that he was a Nestorian himself. Presumably the Catholics of the third century thought as much of Tertullian and the author of the *Philosophumena*. The remaining cases are those of Felix II., who was probably an Antipope and cannot count,

and the two famous cases of Liberius and Honorius. Of these it will be enough to say that even if the charges against them were made good to their full extent, they would still fall short of the two conditions which, as we have seen, constitute formal heresy. Liberius is charged with having signed an heretical formula under constraint of fear and against his belief. That would be a sin against faith, but not a sin of heresy. Honorius is charged with having encouraged Sergius in his Monothelism by writing a letter capable of bearing, though clearly not intended to bear, an heretical sense, and again with having neglected to condemn him. Neither would these acts, if fully substantiated, although blameable, be heretical in the sense expounded to us by Pichler. But in fact both Honorius and Liberius can be sufficiently defended. Indeed, nothing but anti-Catholic prejudice continues to stay the acknowledgment that Liberius was throughout a strenuous and consistent champion of the faith, a Pope of whom Rome can afford to be proud.

Eight more names, then, must come off the black list.

7. Now we come to the cases of *simony*, the last with which we shall need to deal. Under this head Dr. Littledale sets fourteen cases, that is, in his list of spurious Popes previous to Clement VII., but it is also, as we must recollect, on the score of simony that he sets aside as invalid all Popes after Clement VII. with the quiet statement, "No valid election has been possible since;" namely, on the plea that from that time, owing to the simoniacal elections of Alexander VI., Julius II., and Clement VII., there

were no longer Cardinals valid and competent to elect a valid Pope. We have already seen how on theological grounds this theory breaks down, and we are now concerned only with our canonist's legal and historical reasoning.

As in the case of heresy, we must consider what is simony, and how far it is a disqualifying cause?

Simony, in the primary sense, is an agreement to barter spiritual things for temporal, such as money. As such it is forbidden by the Divine law on account of the outrage offered to things spiritual by the implication that things temporal can be their equivalents in value. Ecclesiastical law goes beyond Divine law, and forbids certain transactions which, though they do not actually involve a barter of spirituals for temporals, nevertheless involve serious disrespect, and threaten serious harm, to spiritual things. Particularly under this head is forbidden the promise or bestowal of benefices in return for the promise of other benefices or spiritual favours. A benefice, be it noted, is something spiritual, and so, as there is something spiritual on both sides, there is no simony against the natural law, but only against the positive law. I may mention also, although we need not further concern ourselves about this, that if we wish to interpret rightly any disabling or penalizing law against simony, we must notice whether it is referred to in its complete stage only, that is, when the exchange has actually taken place on both sides, or even whilst it is in the previous imperfect stage.

Turning now to the second question, how far simony disqualifies in the sense of invalidating a

Papal election, we had better go at once to the Bull *Quum tam divino* of Julius II., the Bull in which Dr. Littledale finds his most decisive argument. Julius II. came to the throne in 1503, being the immediate successor of the notorious Alexander VI. In 1505 he published the Bull in question, which is a most strenuous effort to exclude simony from the electoral process. It declares every Papal election to be null and void in which any of the votes have been given through the motive of simony, "by giving, promising, or receiving money, goods of every kind, castles, offices, or benefices," &c., and this even though the election should be unanimous; and he enjoins that "any such simoniacal election shall never afterwards be revalidated either by the subsequent enthronization of the person in question, or the lapse of time, or even the adoration (*i.e.* veneration) or obedience of all the Cardinals." Nor does it permit the same person to be re-elected, but on the contrary deprives him *ipso facto* (without any declaration) of all his present dignities, offices, &c., together with perpetual inability for any subsequent promotion. It then proceeds to empower the Cardinals, the clergy, and people of Rome, the (temporal) subjects of the Pope, the Roman Prefects, &c., to take action for the removal of the intruder.

Here is the Bull, and we must remember the use Dr. Littledale makes of it. In order to prove that the succession of valid Cardinals failed about this time, he seeks to avail himself of the charge of simony against the elections of Innocent VIII., Alexander VI., and Julius II., because after the death of Julius there were no Cardinals living of



older creation than Innocent, or even than Alexander. Hence he has managed to convince himself that this Bull, *Quum tam divino*, is so worded as to be retrospective in its effects. He cites Gammarus (*i.e.*, Gambara, I suppose) as in his commentary on the Bull showing this to be the case. He does not give any reference to Gambara, and I have not been able to find the statement in the only treatise of this author of which I know. It is not, however, likely that Gambara anywhere really made a statement so utterly absurd. There is nothing whatever about the wording of the Bull to convey such a sense, and even Dr. Littledale, since he believes (though wrongly) Julius as well as his two predecessors to have been simoniacally elected, should have hesitated to charge the aspersed Pope with the folly of cutting off the branch on which he sat. I am thankful, however, to Dr. Littledale for sending me on a search through the treatise of Gambara, as it has supplied me with a reference we shall presently find most useful. Meanwhile we must lament that our canonist did not consult the treatise of Cardinal Jaccovaccio (1533),<sup>1</sup> who argues most conclusively, reciting the opinion of others in confirmation of his own, that simony was not previously to the Bull of Julius an invalidating defect, at all events, when the election had been followed by enthronization. He argues from the Bull of Alexander III. that when a majority of two-thirds, always necessary, has been secured, no exception or opposition to the election can be taken on any ground whatever. I may add that Jaccovaccio had in view the Bull of Julius II., and mentions it

<sup>1</sup> *De Concilio*, lib. iv. art. 4.

as having changed the state of the question. We may therefore disregard altogether for present purposes, though without conceding, the charges of simony against the elections of Innocent, Alexander, Julius, or any of their predecessors, thereby delivering ourselves at last of the entire contents of Dr. Littledale's terrible black list.

But what about the Popes subsequent to the Bull of Julius? Dr. Littledale only sets down one, namely, Clement VII., the Pope who, despite his timidity of character, stood out so bravely against Henry VIII. Let us for the moment, and for the sake of argument, admit this to be a true charge, that we may consider the application of the Bull to such a case. Of course simony would have invalidated his election in the first instance, but can we say that the original defect was healed by the subsequent acceptance of the Church? We have at least good canonical authority for assenting to this view. Schmalzgrueber writes:

When the election of the Cardinals has been invalid, it cannot confer any title upon the elect. Hence the acceptance of the Universal Church must be awaited, which if it supervenes will heal the effect of an invalid election . . . provided the disqualification is one of positive law (such as the disqualification of simony would be).<sup>1</sup>

Nor is Schmalzgrueber's authority to be set aside for the trifling reason which is all that Dr. Littledale can bring against it. He points to the phrase in the Bull *Quum tam divino*, which says that a simoniacal election shall not be revalidated "by any lapse of time" (as involving prescription). All that such an

<sup>1</sup> Tom. i. p. 376.

argument on the part of our canonist proves is the insufficiency of his knowledge of canon law. One rule of legal interpretation is that the language of a law is to be taken in its proper and usual sense, *unless any absurd or unjust consequence* should follow from so taking it, and should render the law itself altogether useless. Dr. Littledale's proposed interpretation of the words, "shall not be revalidated by any lapse of time," sins against this rule. His very contention is that the effect of the law is to create an *impasse*, and so deprive the Church of an essential element in her constitution. For this reason alone his proposed interpretation stands condemned; and, in fact, it is clear from the Bull that the object of the phrase is merely to give elbow room to the Cardinals who may have to take action against the intruder. It is to meet the case of a simoniacal intruder, who might well say, "You have let some weeks or more pass without taking action, and now it is too late." Whereas, on the other hand, in dealing with a matter of such delicacy and difficulty, the Cardinals would need to delay action for a while.

So much has been said on the supposition that there has been, even after the Bull of Julius, a simoniacal election to the Papacy, but we must deny that there ever has been, and this on the following grounds:

(a) The charge against Clement VII. rests only on the authority of Guicciardini, an Italian historical writer of the period—if indeed Guicciardini says as much, which is doubtful—and Guicciardini's authority in such matters is none of the best. One naturally asks oneself too whence Guicciardini could have got

his information. His statement is that at the Conclave the Cardinal Colonna went spontaneously to Cardinal de Medici (*i.e.*, Clement) and offered to help him: that after that de Medici, by an extremely secret document, promised Colonna the office of Camerlengo. Did Clement himself or did Colonna mention this to an outsider at the risk of being made to feel the consequence of the Bull *Quum tam divino*, or if it is said that the paper got discovered, how could two clever men run the useless risk of so compromising a written paper? Is it not more likely that the story originated in the gossip of the Conclavists? Of these, Lucius Lector, a quite recent writer on Conclaves, tells us that

Their notes (though often indiscreetly used by the historians of Conclaves) are very useful to fix dates, reveal names, furnish episodes and anecdotes, but they too often fail to catch the more serious side of things, that is to say, the more fundamental and interior reasons of what is going on. These good abbés are very attentive to the incidents and, if the term may be pardoned, to the gossip which goes on in the offices and the lobbies, but are usually much wanting in political appreciation. They do not take comprehensive views of things, and are too apt to think that great effects spring from tiny causes.<sup>1</sup>

Since it is most probable that Guicciardini's source of information was of this kind, if so good, we may surely decline to be moved by his testimony, the more so as Gambara (the writer to whom Dr. Littledale has so kindly referred me) says expressly :

(The Bull) of Julius II., *Quum tam divino*, treats . . . of the election of the Roman Pontiff with great foresight, and provides excellent remedies to prevent simony being

<sup>1</sup> *Le Conclave*, p. 407.

committed at the election of Roman Pontiffs, for any alteration of the constitution is forbidden even to the Cardinals during the vacancy of the See. It is a constitution most holy, and one which cannot be over-praised, and may it ever be observed. It was the cause of the promotion to the Pontifical dignity of His present Holiness (Clement VII.), who never put trust in treasures of gold.<sup>1</sup>

Since Gambara was then Auditor of the Apostolic Palace and Papal Vicar, his testimony is of value, and, after all, Clement is a man of whose personal character we know something from his dealings with Henry VIII., and these all show (however it may have been denied) that he was a truly conscientious man. Why, then, if simoniacally elected, did he not resign, at least at some time or other?

A further and still more weighty reason for disbelieving that since the Bull *Quum tam divino* was issued there has been any real instance of a simoniacal election, whether of Clement or any other, is because it is quite inconceivable that with so many Cardinals and others whose duty it would have been in such a crisis to take action for the deliverance of the Church from a spurious Pope, not one should have responded to the evident obligation. Some Cardinals, let us grant, may have been so wicked as to have condoned and concealed the simony, but it is rather a large order to require us to believe that at any Papal election during this recent period there was not present a single Cardinal conscientious enough to rise to the responsibilities of his position.

But the chief reason for confidence that, since the Bull *Quum tam divino*, there has never been another simoniacal Papal election, is drawn from the theo-

<sup>1</sup> *De Auct. Legati de Latere*, lib. ii. nn. 424—427.

logical principle with which we started, the principle that the special Providence (or *Assistentia*) which watches over the Church will not allow it to adhere to a spurious Pontiff; and it is probably truer to say, as well as more commonly held by theologians, that if, on a doubt arising as to the validity of an election, the acceptance by the Universal Church is to be awaited, it is awaited, not as *ratifying* a title which was till then invalid, but as a sure *sign* that the hitherto doubtful title was all along valid.

We might end here, for very little, I venture to think, of Dr. Littledale's formidable indictment is left standing. Still, he has his reply to the principle I have insisted on so much, which let him give in his own words.

The only plea which can be set up in defence of the Ultramontane theory is that of begging the whole question, and saying: "As it is certain that St. Peter did receive the privileges of Infallibility and Sovereign Jurisdiction over the whole Church, and that he conveyed and transmitted them indefeasibly to the Popes of Rome, who are his successors, it is necessary to believe as matter of faith, in despite of any seemingly adverse testimony, that God took care that the gates of Hell should never prevail against His Church, and that the succession on which all true jurisdiction depends has been preserved unimpaired amidst all troubles and dangers which have beset it."

This, of course, does not meet the difficulty at all, and the truer way of regarding the question is to say: "If God have indeed attached such inestimable privileges to the Papal Chair, and if, as all theologians and canonists agree, the occupant of that chair must be validly elected in order to exercise them, then we shall find on inquiry that the line has been regular and undisputed from the first; that no doubt, and, above all, no invalidity, attaches to any one of those reckoned in the succession. And the super-



abundant proof that such is not the case, that actually no See in the whole world has so many flaws of the gravest kind in its pedigree, none has ever sunk morally so low and so often in the person of its Pontiffs, is the final disproof of the Petrine claims, as a mere human legend, destitute of any Scriptural, legal, or historical basis.”<sup>1</sup>

And elsewhere he says “the (local) Church of Rome is the typical home of schism.”

That there is no begging of the question in the line of reasoning we have followed, has been shown sufficiently in the earlier part of this tract. We do not assume, but prove, by solid and invincible arguments, that the Supremacy was instituted for the Church and destined to continue in her to the end ; and this proof having been solidly established, we are clearly entitled to deduce from it the further consequences which it involves.

What, however, are we to say of Dr. Littledale’s suggested inversion of our argument—that if the Papacy had been a Divine institution, there would have been no disputes, or scandals, or flaws, in the Papal Succession, but that it would have passed down the ages, those turbulent ages, in an ever tranquil and undisturbed course? We must say to this suggestion that it is precisely analogous to that which is so often advanced to prove that there is no God. “If God’s providence watched over the Papacy,” says Dr. Littledale, “it would not allow these scandals to disturb the preservation of the Papal line.” “If God’s providence ruled this world,” says the atheist, “it would not allow human liberty to introduce so many and such terrible scandals, causing the loss of so many

<sup>1</sup> *Petrine Claims*, p. 339.

souls." In both cases the answer must be, that it is not for us to prescribe to the providence of God how much of the evil exercise of free-will it shall tolerate, how much stay. If we watch we shall detect ample signs of God's action in the world, and if there are also occurrences which to our short-sightedness escape its purview, we must be content to believe that God has wise grounds for permitting them. In like manner we must reason of the Papacy. Twenty-five years ago our narrowminded prudence was apt to think it impossible that God should permit the Pope to be deprived of the free government of his own city. Now we know that it is possible, and that out of the very depths of the seeming impossibility, God can guide the Papacy to the grandest illustrations of its Divine character.

And so, too, must we judge of the past. There are unquestionably some chapters in the history of the long line of Popes which, as we read them, fill our hearts with sadness and our minds with astonishment. Had we lived in the days when St. Peter received his great commission, and had we realized the greatness of the trust confided to his successors, together with the special providence given to aid them in its discharge, we might perhaps have been prone to assert that such scandals as have at times happened must needs have been prevented. But in so judging we should only have been revealing the narrowness of our conceptions, and must now allow that God's thoughts have proved to be not our thoughts. He has allowed more than we perhaps should have thought possible to the action of the rebellious free-will, and yet at the

same time He has stamped the history of Peter's See with the evidences of His providential action in characters too plain to be mistaken. Dr. Littledale has ventured to speak of that august line of Pontiffs as if it were chiefly characterized by its moral vileness. "No see in the whole world . . . ever sunk morally so low and so often in the person of its Pontiffs." This certainly is not the general verdict on the line as a whole, a line which, on the contrary, is recognized as surpassing immensely all other successions, whether of Bishops or Princes. We have seen, too, that it is grossly exaggerated even as regards that series of Pontiffs against whom most has been charged. And when told that the Papacy has been the "typical home of schism," we may remember that the schisms have been, without a single real exception, not in the Papacy but against it, and, remembering this, we may request Dr. Littledale to change his simile for one more familiar, and say rather that the Papacy has shown itself to be the typical rock against which the storms of sin and of worldliness have ever directed their chief assaults. After all, when we read of the material force arrayed against the Papacy in the interests of worldliness so often and so persistently, and of its demands carried to such lengths, we should not wonder so much that it succeeded in placing on the throne of St. Peter an occasional unworthy occupant, or involving some Papal elections in discreditable scandals, but we must rather wonder that no worse results followed, such as the propounding of false doctrines, or a general corruption of the Church's life. We must wonder, also, that so marvellous a power of recovery has

invariably manifested itself, drawing needed regeneration out of the very depths of the scandals. Our wonder, too, should be at the accurate correspondence between the fulfilment and foreshadowing. For when our Lord sat in the barque of Peter to prefigure His future providence over Peter's See, we do not read that the ship was floating in calm waters, but we read that there was a great tempest, great enough to make stout hearts quake, and faithful hearts fail, and that He seemed meanwhile to sleep a sleep of weakness ; and yet that there was no ground for faith to fear.

## Dean Farrar on the Observance of Good Friday.

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BY THE REV. HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.

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FEW more striking illustrations could be found of the fact that the tide of Ritualism in this country is continually rising higher and higher than the change which has recently come over the face of Anglicanism in the celebration of Good Friday. Fifty years ago the chief religious observances by which the day was solemnized consisted in a general consumption of Hot Cross Buns, and a by no means so general attendance at a morning service conducted in strict accordance with the Book of Common Prayer. In some more conservative households the appearance of salt-fish<sup>1</sup> at the dinner-table also served to mark the occasion as an unwonted one, but otherwise the religiously minded were content to show their piety chiefly by remaining within doors and restricting themselves severely to Sunday books and semi-ecclesiastical music. Now all this is changed. At most of the more frequented places of worship our Anglican friends on Good Friday are invited to attend some three, four, or even five different services. What is more striking, the devotion of the Three Hours' Agony at mid-day has become as firmly estab-

<sup>1</sup> The salt-fish must undoubtedly be a survival of the fasting discipline maintained in England by Act of Parliament long after the separation from Rome, and from which Elizabeth and her successor used graciously to issue dispensations under the Privy Seal.

lished among them as if it had come down on "Continuity" principles from the Bishops of the ancient British Church, instead of being the pious invention of a Peruvian Jesuit in the last century.<sup>1</sup> It is not only in churches regarded as distinctively Ritualistic that it has taken root, but it flourishes in Anglican Cathedrals and is attended by crowded congregations under episcopal patronage. Without pretending to enumerate all, the newspapers show that in at least ten of the great Cathedrals, including York Minster and St. Paul's, the Three Hours' service is punctually carried out; while in numerous other churches less immediately subject to episcopal influence, we hear of "Mass of the Pre-sanctified," of "Adoration of the Cross," of "Tenebræ," and of the open-air procession of the "Way of the Cross."

It was no doubt with these innovations prominently before his mind that Dean Farrar on last Good Friday morning (1895) addressed a large congregation assembled in Westminster Abbey. In the summary of his remarks given by the *Times*, the sermon is described as "a discourse against the morbid observance of Good Friday." The key-note was struck in his opening sentences. I adopt, in default of the full text, the condensed report in the same journal:

<sup>1</sup> The Jesuit in question was Father Alonso Mesia, who published at Lima, in Peru, about 1720, the manual he composed for this service, entitled *Devocion á las tres horas de la agonía de Christo nuestro Redentor*. Thence, as Cancellieri and Moroni attest, it spread gradually from Peru to Europe. Father Mesia's book was translated in Rome in 1789, and was afterwards frequently reprinted, in Italian and in several other languages. When Cancellieri wrote in 1817, the devotion had become an annual practice in some half-dozen or more of the Roman churches. Moroni, in 1850, describes it as familiar in every part of the Christian world.



It was not [said the preacher] suggested by Scripture or by the practice of the early Church that we should spend the day in morbid, unnatural, and useless attempts to reproduce in imagination the physical agonies of our Lord upon the Cross. An Anglican manual of devotion said: "Put a crucifix before you and weep over the five blessed wounds." He could not conceive any advice more absolutely unprimitive, unscriptural, and uncatholic, or more likely to stimulate the luxury of fantastic emotionalism in place of the energy of manly righteousness. The Gospels did not say anything of the wounds, except of the spear-thrust after death; or of anguish, except the single cry "I thirst." The same was true of the Epistles; but the writers preached "Christ crucified," because the Cross was a special stumbling-block. Their tone was never morbid, moaning, or hysterical; nor were the brief human sufferings of Christ ever dissociated from the glory that should follow. Many modern hymns seemed to express the unnatural, self-macerating misery of *convulsionnaires*, of half-dazed Spanish friars, rather than love, joy, peace in believing. There was nothing in the Gospels like the verses containing the lines, "Come let us stand beneath the Cross" and "Thorns and Cross, and Nails and Lance." But the hymns were not so bad as the language not uncommon among Romish writers.

Dean Farrar then proceeded to quote a passage from one of Father Faber's works, which the reader, I think, will be glad to have before him entire.

The Sacred Heart can bear no more. It gives out its red life as in a winepress. Drop by drop, unnaturally, through the burning pores of the skin, the beads of Blood ooze out. They stand upon His brow and then roll down His face. They clog His hair. They blind His eyes. They fill His mouth, otherwise than as the chalice of His Blood filled it three hours ago. They mat His beard. They wet His hands. They suffuse every limb in a universal Sweat of Blood. They stain His garments. They ruddy the olive-roots. They spot the white dust with black. Truly, if ever suffering was beautiful—and how little

suffering there has been on earth that was not beautiful!—it was the woe which the paschal moon beheld beneath the olive-trees that night.<sup>1</sup>

Whether Dean Farrar quoted the passage at length, the report does not state, but he proceeded to comment upon it by declaring that

Such language was mawkish and effeminate, unreal, and utterly untrue to Scripture.<sup>2</sup> The early Christians would have shuddered at any representation as dead of Him who is alive for evermore. The aspect in which they viewed the Cross was that of triumph and exaltation, never that of moaning and misery. Where was it that on Good Friday the Church was hung in black, the light excluded, and the people scourged themselves with chains? Only in countries like Mexico, the most ignorant, superstitious, and corrupt in the world, were these theatrical methods adopted to stimulate a physical emotion.

There are so many astonishing statements in this pronouncement of Dean Farrar's, that it is impossible to touch upon them all. To begin with,—the preacher, in condemning the wish to "reproduce in the imagination the physical sufferings of Christ," because such an attempt is "morbid," is simply using one of those question-begging epithets which put argument out of court. Etymologically, the word morbid means diseased or unhealthy. If it is morally unhealthy

<sup>1</sup> *The Precious Blood*, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> It is singular that Dean Farrar, although he seems to suggest a doubt of the reality of the phenomenon, should himself write of the Agony in very much the same strain. I have no space to quote the whole passage, but the climax of the description is reached in these words: "The great drops of anguish which drop from Him in the deathful struggle, look to them like heavy gout of blood. Under the dark shadows of the trees, amid the interrupted moonlight, it seems to them that there is an angel with Him, who supports His failing strength, who enables Him to rise victorious from those first prayers, with nothing but the crimson traces of that bitter struggle on His brow." (*Life of Christ*, p. 625.)

"to put a crucifix before you and meditate upon—weep over, if you will—the five sacred wounds," may we be permitted to ask why?

We may go to witness a tragedy like *Othello* or *King Lear*, and if the actor's consummate art, "but in a fiction, in a dream of passion," draws tears from the eyes of his audience, we shall be told, as Aristotle has told us, that such a tragedy is a moral education. Young lads at school are encouraged to read sentimental stories like those which Dean Farrar himself has written for them, glorifying the attachment of big boys verging on manhood to little boys with pretty faces and curling locks, and no one stands up to describe such reading as unhealthy. But when a man like Father Faber, with his ardent faith and poetic temperament, paints for us in somewhat vivid colours the details of the one real tragedy, the sufferings of Jesus Christ borne for our sins and through which we hope for Heaven, this Anglican dignitary is scandalized, and raises his voice to ring the changes on "mawkish and effeminate, morbid and hysterical, unreal, and utterly untrue to Scripture." *Judæis quidem scandalum*, to the Jews indeed a stumbling-block. Of a verity the age of the Pharisees is not yet past.

It must not, of course, be supposed that I am denying the possibility that realism in such matters can be carried to excess. We may quite consistently reject, for our own more sensitive age and country, those coarser appeals to the emotions which caused no unhealthy shock to minds less refined or more familiarized with pain. But there is little danger that the preachers who strive to kindle in the hearts of their nineteenth-century hearers some spark of

compassion for the Crucified, will introduce into our churches the horrors of the dissecting-room. There is, as I conceive, a danger much more immediate, and likely to be much more disastrous in its consequences—I mean the desire to banish from men's minds every thought of pain and suffering as if it were an accursed thing. Holy Scripture teaches, and the early Christians took the lesson to heart, that suffering was a blessing and a mark of God's love, and that strength and courage to endure all trials was only to be found in the contemplation of the Passion of Jesus Christ. If Dean Farrar could build up a world out of the same mawkish materials of which he constructs his school stories, I dare say that such a world would be quite content to dispense with the crucifix altogether; but in the world which God has made, and from which pain and sin and cruelty can never be banished, experience shows that those who labour most and endure most for God and for their fellow-men, will also be those who have devoted longest hours in striving to realize the sufferings of their Master.

And the most astonishing of all is this: that if we wish to find a parallel to Father Faber's treatment of the sufferings of the Passion, it is in the pages of Dean Farrar's *Life of Christ* that we shall find his realism not merely imitated, but exaggerated. Presumably Dean Farrar's late sermon is to be construed as an act of contrition for the sins of his own youth, but in that case it would have been more graceful if the preacher, instead of pointing the finger of scorn at the Romanist ascetic, had recited for the benefit of his hearers a few passages from that standard work, Farrar's *Life of Christ*. The following for instance:

For indeed death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of horrible and ghastly—dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds—all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish. The wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries, especially of the head and stomach, became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst. . . . Such was the death to which Christ was doomed. (p. 697.)

But the main object of the present pamphlet is not to discuss the moral healthiness or the reverse of our Good Friday devotions, but rather to call attention to the distorted presentment of early Christian history and practice which Dean Farrar had no scruple in setting before his crowded congregation at the Abbey. I may take it that the drift at least of his remarks is not unfairly represented by the following words attributed to him by more than one of his reporters: "The aspect in which the early Christians invariably viewed the Cross was that of triumph and exaltation, never that of moaning and misery. It was the emblem of victory and of rapture, not of blood or of anguish." What is to be said of this as the judgment of one who professes to be a specialist in the domain of early Christian history?

And the first remark which suggests itself is the

query: What does Dean Farrar understand by the term "early Christians"? The words are very elastic ones. They may include anything from strictly Apostolic times down to the close of the age of the great Doctors. Probably ninety-nine out of a hundred of those listening to Dean Farrar went away with the idea that the mournful conception of the Cross and of Good Friday was an innovation introduced by the Popes of Rome somewhere after the time of Gregory the Great. If pressed as to his meaning, Dean Farrar would no doubt take refuge in a very narrow interpretation of his ambiguous phrase, limiting it perhaps to the first century after Christ's Ascension. But even so I think that he would find it difficult indeed to make good his words. Let us briefly consider how the matter stands.

Dean Farrar says in the first place that this conception of the Cross of Christ is un-Scriptural. If he means that the Scripture does not speak so plainly on the subject as to exclude all possible cavil, one may conceivably agree with him, but then in that sense a good many other things, the practice of infant baptism and the observance of Sunday amongst the number, are un-Scriptural also. If, on the other hand, he means that the inspired writings in any sense discountenance the idea of mourning in sympathy with Christ's Passion, his assertion can only be met with an emphatic negative. There are, on the contrary, a host of passages in the Epistles which, according to their obvious meaning, suggest precisely that conception of the Cross which Dean Farrar is protesting against, and which can only be explained away by doing violence to the context.



The foundation of this extraordinary misunderstanding seems to lie in the idea that Catholics mourn over our Lord's Death in the same spirit as that in which the Syrian damsels wept over Thammuz. The Church does not mourn over that Death in the sense that she would have it reversed, but she weeps, as I have said, *in sympathy* with Christ. The intimate union of Christ and His Church<sup>1</sup> and the conformity of each individual member with the mortal life of its Head, are apparently conceptions to which Dean Farrar is altogether a stranger; and yet they are surely patent upon the face of Holy Scripture. Take, for instance, the words of St. Peter:<sup>2</sup> "This is thanksworthy, if for conscience towards God a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully. . . . For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps. Who when He was reviled, did not revile," &c., or again:<sup>3</sup> "Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought." So St. Paul:<sup>4</sup> "With Christ am I nailed to the Cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me," and v. 24: "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences," or Coloss. i. 24: "I Paul, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His Body, which is the Church." Surely to the Apostles the Cross did not seem a motive for jubilation and merry-making. These and many similar passages suggest that suffering is a blessed thing, and that Christians

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. iv. and v.

<sup>2</sup> I St. Peter ii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> I St. Peter iv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Galat. ii. 19. Cf. 2 Cor. i. 5.

were to be led by the thought of the Cross to court pain and opprobrium in order to be more like their Master. This love of suffering was the "*word of the Cross*, to them that perish foolishness;" and in such a passage as Galat. vi. 14: "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world," it is a mere trifling with words to say that the Cross is viewed as an emblem of triumph. On the contrary, the passage is only the counterpart of that in which St. Paul says that he glories in his infirmities. The Cross is used as the equivalent of sorrow, and sorrows do not cease to be sorrows and to need consolation from the example of Christ, because the first Christians had the grace even to long for them in the hope of the glory to come.

And this conception, which is patent upon the face of Holy Scripture, becomes only increasingly explicit and distinct as our documents multiply. The writings still preserved to us of the earliest ages of Christianity are few and rare, and their generally formal character forbids us to expect to find in them any clear picture of the devotional side of the life of the early Christians; nevertheless, even these speak so clearly that only the most extraordinary perversity can fail to grasp the lesson they convey. Let us take in the first place the question of fasting. Although we have not perhaps sufficient warrant for tracing back the observance of the forty days' fast to Apostolic times, the same cannot be said of the Paschal fast, the fast of Good Friday itself. On the contrary, we find that both St. Irenæus, writing in the latter half of the second century, and

Tertullian, *c.* A.D. 200, were familiar with this fast as a custom universally established, though not observed everywhere in the same manner. St. Irenæus informs us<sup>1</sup> that some fasted one day, some two, others for several, while others again counted forty hours to their day. He adds that this variety of practice was of long standing, (πολὺ πρότερον) "an important statement," says Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, "as carrying back the existence of the fast practically up to Apostolic times." Again, Tertullian, who clearly recognizes the distinction made by the early Christians between the Pasch of the Resurrection (πάσχα ἀναστάσιμον) and the Pasch of the Crucifixion (πάσχα σταυρώσιμον),<sup>2</sup> speaks of the latter, of Good Friday in other words, as "the day of the pasch on which there is a universal and almost public observance of a fast, and on which we very properly lay aside the kiss of peace."<sup>3</sup> Now it does not seem unreasonable to argue that if the memory of the Crucifixion had for the early Christians that triumphant significance which Dean Farrar supposes, the Friday on which the Passion was commemorated ought to have been the most joyful day of the entire calendar. So far from that, it was in Tertullian's time the one day in all the year

<sup>1</sup> Ap. Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* v. 24.

<sup>2</sup> The association of the word Pasch with the Passion of our Lord became so close, that writers ignorant of Hebrew commonly derived *pasch* from the Greek πάσχειν, to suffer. (Cf. Augustine, Ep. 55, *Ad Ian.*)

<sup>3</sup> "Sic et die Paschæ quo communis et quasi publica jejunandi religio est, merito deponimus osculum." (*De Orat.* c. 18.) There is nothing to show that the omission of the kiss of peace had any reference to the kiss of Judas, for this took place on the Thursday, and Tertullian says that the kiss was omitted on other fast-days also. It seems, therefore, to have been regarded as a sign of joy, and to have been laid aside during penitential seasons.

which Christians universally agreed in keeping as a complete fast, not merely as a station (*semi-jejunium*), but by an entire abstention from food, continued in most cases until the Easter Sunday morning. Can any reasonable being fail to draw the inference that the annual commemoration of the sufferings of our Lord suggested not rejoicing, but sympathy with and participation in those sufferings? Nay, every Friday of the year,<sup>1</sup> save during Easter-tide, was kept as a lesser day of fasting, being regarded as a kind of weekly memorial of the great Friday, just as on the same principle every Sunday in the year was a renewal of the joys which marked out the Sunday of the Resurrection.<sup>2</sup> When Dean Farrar can show that any race of men are in the habit of giving vent to their feelings of exultation by remaining without food for forty consecutive hours, he may be able to make good his theory.

Moreover, while documents fail us in the Apostolic Fathers for anything like a complete understanding of their attitude towards the Crucifixion, still I should like to call attention to some familiar words of St. Ignatius of Antioch, which, if not conclusive, are at least significant. Writing to the Roman Church on the eve of his martyrdom, he begs of them not to do anything to hinder his attainment of his crown.

<sup>1</sup> This exceptional observance of the Friday is attested, among other writers, by Origen. (*Contra Celsum*, iii. 22.) The Friday station is mentioned also in the *Didache*.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to notice that the scrupulous abstention of the early Christians from any sort of fasting on Sundays and during the fifty days of the Paschal season, is equally attested by Tertullian. (*De Corona*, c. iii.) It was a duty *not to fast* at such times, precisely because they were seasons of joy and of sympathy with the triumph of the Resurrection.

I exhort you, be ye not an unseasonable kindness to me. Let me be given to the wild beasts, for through them I can attain unto God. I am God's wheat and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread (of Christ). Bear with me. I know what is expedient for me. *Now am I beginning to be a disciple.* Come fire and cross and grapplings with wild beasts, cuttings and manglings, wrenching of bones, breaking of limbs, crushings of my whole body, come cruel tortures of the devil to assail me. Only be it mine to attain unto Jesus Christ. . .

Him I seek who dies on our behalf; Him I desire who rose again for our sake. The pangs of a new birth are upon me. Bear with me, brethren. Bestow not on the world one who desireth to be God's, neither allure him with material things. Suffer me to receive the pure light. When I am come thither then shall I be a man. *Permit me to be an imitator of the Passion of my God.* If any man hath Him within himself, let him understand what I desire, and let him have fellow-feeling with me, for he knoweth the things which straiten me.<sup>1</sup>

Whether these words of a contemporary of the Apostles be "morbid" or not, they seem to bear witness to a desire of suffering of which the motive is to be found in the wish to be more closely conformed to the likeness of the Passion of our Lord. As the same holy Martyr says again in his letter to the Smyrnæans, answering the self-imposed question, *Why* had he delivered himself up to death? "Near to the sword, near to God (*i.e.*, Christ),<sup>2</sup> in company with wild beasts, in company with God. Only let it be in the name of Jesus Christ, so that we may suffer together with Him (*εἰς τὸ συμπαθεῖν αὐτῷ*)."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Ignatius, *Ad Rom.* cc. 4—6.

<sup>2</sup> There are several passages in St. Ignatius' Epistles, where he uses the term God absolutely, to designate our Blessed Lord.

<sup>3</sup> I have not quoted above the well-known saying of the same writer, *ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρως ἐσταύρωται*, usually rendered, "My love is crucified,"

There are many indications of the same spirit which are to be found in the writings of the first three centuries. Space can only be found here for one short extract from St. Melito of Sardis, about A.D. 150, who in a homily on the Crucifixion speaks thus :

He on whose account the earth quaked, He that suspended the earth, was hanged up ; He that fixed the heavens was fixed with nails ; He that supported the earth was supported upon a tree ; the Lord was exposed to ignominy with a naked body ; God put to death ; the King of Israel slain by an Israelitish right hand. Ah ! the fresh wickedness of the fresh murder ! The Lord was exposed with a naked body ; He was not deemed worthy even of covering ; but in order that He may not be seen, the lights were turned away, and the day became dark because they were slaying God, who was naked upon the tree.<sup>1</sup>

The whole passage from which this extract is taken is far too long to quote, but it is all couched in the same strain. Who can believe that in making such appeals to the compassion and sympathy of his hearers St. Melito regarded the Cross "exclusively as the emblem of victory and rapture, not of blood or of anguish"?

But we must move on a couple of centuries to the period when we really begin to get full light as

because Bishop Lightfoot thinks that *ἐρως* signifies *lust*, and that the passage consequently means, "I have crucified my passions." But it is remarkable that Origen understood it in the former sense, and quotes it in his Preface to the *Canticle of Canticles* as a parallel for the warmth of language found in that poem.

<sup>1</sup> The authenticity of this fragment is admitted by the non-Catholic scholars Harnack and Preuschen in their authoritative *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, Leipzig, 1893, vol. i. p. 252. The view they adopt is founded on an article of Krüger's in the *Ztschrft. f. wissenschaft. Theol.* p. 434. 1888.

to the daily religious life of Christians, and as to the details of their ritual and modes of thought. There is one incomparable record preserved to us of that epoch, the narrative of a pilgrim lady from the West who visited the Holy Places about the year 380, and who has set down a full description of all that she witnessed at Jerusalem in the course of her long stay. Of the authenticity of St. Silvia's narrative no doubt has ever been suggested by any one of the numberless critics who have discussed it. Besides telling us much about the Holy Places at Jerusalem and elsewhere, about her journeys, about the extraordinary austerities of Lent, in which many people abstained from food for as much as five days together, she gives a full account of the ceremonies of Holy Week as they were observed on the very spot where our Lord suffered. We can only select a few passages here and there, but they will be abundantly sufficient to show the spirit in which both the native Judeans and the vast crowds of pilgrims present from all parts of the Christian world observed the holy season.

The first remark we meet which specially concerns us, occurs in St. Silvia's notes on the service at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the Wednesday morning.

A priest [she says] stands before the rails, and takes the Gospel and reads that passage where Judas Iscariot went to the Jews and determined what they would give him to betray the Lord. And when this passage has been read, there is such a groaning and moaning of all the people that there is no one who would not be moved to tears at that hour.



Passing over intervening matter, we may next note the description St. Silvia gives us of the wonderful night-watch on the Mount of Olives beginning on the Thursday evening. The whole population, even down to the little children, stream out of Jerusalem and make their way across the brook of Cedron just as our Lord Himself had crossed it with His disciples after the Last Supper three hundred and fifty years before. There upon the hill beyond they spend the night among the olive-trees, occupying the time until cock-crow with a continual succession of prayers, canticles, psalms, and the reading of appropriate passages from the Gospels and the prophecies.

And thence [she goes on] all down to the smallest child descend on foot along with the Bishop, where on account of the great crowd of people wearied with vigils and worn out with daily fastings, and because they have to descend so steep a hill they come gently and slowly with canticles to Gethsemane.

At Gethsemane, after suitable prayers,

That passage of the Gospel is read where the Lord was apprehended, and when this passage has been read there is such a moaning and groaning of all the people, with weeping, that the groans can be heard almost at the city.

Returning to the city in the grey of the morning, they proceed to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, receive an exhortation from the Bishop, and are then dismissed for two or three hours of sleep.

At about eight a.m. on the same morning, which is of course Good Friday, the ceremony begins of the kissing of the relic of the True Cross,

discovered, according to tradition, only fifty years before. The Bishop sits holding the sacred wood in his hand, with the deacons around him. Each one comes up in turn, bows down, touches the relic with his forehead and his eyes, kisses both the wood of the Cross and the title, and then passes on.

After this we have the description of a three hours' ceremony, beginning at mid-day, closely resembling, in its conception and general character, the service which Father Mesia, little knowing how closely he was emulating the spirit of the early ages, organized less than two centuries ago in far-off Peru. It consisted chiefly in the reading, in the presence of the Bishop, of every passage in the Holy Scripture, in the Evangelists, the Prophets, or the Epistles, which had reference to the Passion and sufferings of our Lord, together with suitable canticles and prayers. The assembly is held in the great atrium or court, open to the sky, situated, St. Silvia tells us, between the chapel of the Cross and the Church of the Resurrection, all being part of the sumptuous edifice erected by Constantine over the site of Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre. Even in this open space the crowd is packed so tight that it is hardly possible to open the doors. Then, says St. Silvia,

At the several lections and prayers there is such emotion displayed and lamentation of all the people as is wonderful to hear. For there is no one, great or small, who does not weep on that day during those three hours, in a way which cannot be imagined, that the Lord should have suffered such things for us.

And thereupon when the ninth hour (three o'clock) approaches, that passage is read from the Gospel according

to St. John where our Lord gave up the ghost. And when this has been read, a prayer is said, and the assembly is dismissed.<sup>1</sup>

I do not know whether Dean Farrar considers these pilgrims and inhabitants of Jerusalem, the contemporaries of St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and St. Ephraem, as early Christians or not, but it is quite clear that his unmeasured invective must fall upon them, and that they too will have to be classed with the "*convulsionnaires*," the "half-dazed Spanish friars," and the inhabitants of "countries like Mexico, the most ignorant, superstitious, and corrupt in the world." What adds to the importance of the passages I have been quoting is that Palestine at this epoch was visited by a continual stream of pilgrims, coming, like St. Silvia, from the most distant corners of the Christian world. St. Jerome, who came from Rome but two or three years later to take up his abode in the vicinity of the Holy Places, and to spend there a life of prayer, study, and mortification, is never tired of speaking of the crowds of devout pilgrims who thronged to these spots, and, as we know from the still extant journal of the pilgrim of Bordeaux, the movement had been going on then for more than fifty years. Thus the traditions and practices of the Holy City were carried back into every Christian land, and we are not surprised that St. Cyril of Jerusalem should write, about A.D. 350, that fragments of the wood of the True Cross were already

<sup>1</sup> *Peregrinatio St. Silviae*, apud Duchesne, *Origines*, pp. 485—490. There is an English translation in the Palestine Pilgrims Text Society Series.

scattered throughout the whole world, or that we should find mention of such a relic a few years later in a dated inscription of North Africa.

To Jerusalem the pilgrims came primarily to honour the Cross and to pay at the shrine of their Saviour's tomb a tribute, not of exultation, but of tears. Paula and Eustochium, in A.D. 386, writing from Bethlehem to Marcella in Rome, probably by the hand of St. Jerome, and anticipating in imagination her coming to Palestine to join them, say: "And can we hope then to see the day when we may enter together the grotto of the Saviour [at Gethsemane], when we may weep at the sepulchre of the Lord, weep there with the Sister and the Mother,<sup>1</sup> kissing [*lambere*, i.e., licking] the wood of the Cross; and on the Mountain of Olives be raised up in heart and in desire along with our Lord ascending to Heaven."<sup>2</sup> The joy, be it remarked, is kept for the site of the Ascension, the weeping is reserved for the sepulchre.

Or if again, we wanted to know of what nature were the canticles and discourses which at such holy seasons kindled the devotion of those who assisted at them, we may turn to the works of St. Ephraem Syrus, who died a few years earlier, in 378. The word *hymni* in St. Silvia which I have translated canticles, was probably a general term often applied to the Psalms, but inasmuch as it is sometimes distinguished from *psalmi* it must have extended to other metrical compositions. Now among the works of St. Ephraem recently published by Mgr. Lamy,

<sup>1</sup> Vallarsi's notes suggest that Maria Cleophe and our Blessed Lady are intended.

<sup>2</sup> St. Jerome, Letter 46. Migne, *P.L.* vol. 22, p. 491.

we have a number of his hymns on the Passion. St. Ephraem's hymns were celebrated all through the East, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that these or others similar in character supplied the very words which St. Silvia heard sung by the devout Christians of Jerusalem. Let us take a few specimens :

3. O blessed spot, thy narrow room may be set against all the world. That which is contained in thee, though bounded in narrow compass, filleth the universe. Blessed is the dwelling-place in which with holy hand the bread was broken. In thee the grape which grew on Mary's vine, was crushed in the chalice of salvation.

*Resp.* Blessed is He whom His Holy Mysteries have proclaimed.

O blessed spot ! No man hath seen nor shall see the things which thou hast seen. In thee the Lord Himself became true altar, priest, the bread and chalice of Salvation. He alone sufficeth for all, yet none for Him sufficeth. Altar He is and lamb, victim and sacrificer; priest as well as food.

It is in this strain, and at great length, that St. Ephraem apostrophizes the chamber of the Last Supper in his third hymn on the Passion. In the fourth, he passes to the Garden, and to other sites and things connected with the same subject :

1. O blessed spot, held worthy to drink in the sweat of the Son that fell on thee. The Son mingled His sweat with the ground that He might cast out the sweat of Adam who with sweat had tilled it. O blessed earth, that He renewed with His sweat ! The earth that was sick was healed because it sweated. Who ever saw the sick ere this healed with a sweat that was not its own ?

3. O blessed reed of mockery placed in the hand of our King. The wicked tormentors snatched at it, showing that with this reed was written the doom by which they were to be destroyed.

6. Blessed art thou, O little board (the title of the Cross)! Upon thee they bent their eyes as upon the King's likeness. Thee too they nailed to the Cross with Him. The King himself presented the image of death; but the little board, His likeness, was glorious with the purple of royalty. Thou wast not clothed in this outward semblance, but thou wast soaked through with the veiled likenesses of thy crucified King, so that thy outward form might speak of the beauties hidden within thee.<sup>1</sup>

These hymns, it seems to me, are very similar in tone to the "Thorns and Cross, and Nails and Lance," or to the poetical prose of Father Faber. But perhaps even more plainly do we find the same spirit expressed in the Discourses. The seven "Sermons for Holy Week" might all of them have been delivered as Passion sermons in the middle ages. I should not think of calling St. Ephraem's treatment of the theme "morbid," but he harps continually upon the notes of sympathy, compassion, and wonder at our Saviour's infinite condescension, dwelling with much insistence upon the physical suffering and the humiliations of the Cross. It is not easy to bring this home to the reader, for the impression is produced rather by the cumulative effect of the whole than by individual sentences. I may quote here first a short phrase or two, and then I hope I may be pardoned if I give, *speciminis gratia*, one or two longer passages. Speaking of the Crucifixion, he asks:

Were all things in Heaven and on earth plunged in deepest grief, or did they rejoice that mankind was now redeemed? No, he replies, the grief must far have prevailed. . . There was no angel in Heaven that did not mourn, no creature on earth that was without pain, and, if the word had been given, they would have destroyed

<sup>1</sup> S. Ephraem Syri, *Hymni et Sermones*. Ed. Lamy, i. pp. 658—668.

the house of Israel. . . It was at this hour that sorrow came upon all creation ; every moment brought suffering upon Heaven and earth. . . What man would not be awe-stricken and be wholly plunged in grief that the children of Adam have given vinegar to drink to Him who is the fountain of life.<sup>1</sup>

“Glory be to Him, how much He suffered!” is an exclamation which from time to time bursts from the lips of the preacher at a breathing-space in his discourse. It is, however, from continuous passages that the general effect will best be appreciated. Take this description of the Scourging :

After many vehement outcries against Pilate, the all-mighty One was scourged like the meanest criminal. Surely there must have been commotion and horror at the sight. Let the heavens and earth stand awe-struck to behold Him who swayeth the rod of fire, Himself smitten with scourges, to behold Him who spread over the earth the veil of the skies and who set fast the foundations of the mountains, who poised the earth over the waters and sent down the blazing lightning-flash, now beaten by infamous wretches over a stone pillar that His own word had created. They, indeed, stretched out His limbs and outraged Him with mockeries. A man whom He had formed wielded the scourge. He who sustains all creatures with His might submitted His back to their stripes ; He who is the Father’s right arm yielded His own arms to be extended. The pillar of ignominy was embraced by Him who bears up and sustains the heaven and the earth in all their splendour. Savage dogs did bark at the Lord who with His thunder shakes the mountains, they sharpened their teeth against the Son of Glory.

How was it, Lord [he goes on], that these vile foxes could lay their grasp on Thee who art the lightning, and not be swept away like smoke before the wind ? How was it that these unclean hands could touch Thy purity and

<sup>1</sup> Loc. cit. pp. 493, 499, 511.



not melt forthwith like wax before the fire? How did these fettered slaves enchain Thee? How did these bondsmen bind Thee fast, who settest loose the heaven and the earth, and dissolvest the mountains at a word?

The same strain is continued over several pages, and amongst other quaint fancies St. Ephraem remarks: "The very column must have quivered as if it were alive, the cold stone must have felt that the Master was bound to it who had given it its being. The pillar shuddered, knowing that the Lord of all creatures was being scourged." And he adds, as a marvel which was to be witnessed even to his own day, that the "column had contracted with fear beneath the Body of Christ."

And all these expressions of deep feeling belong, be it remembered, to the fourth century, to the very epoch when the Cross and the *labarum* first began to be publicly displayed. I am not disputing—no one can dispute—that the Cross has been to the Christians of every age an emblem of hope and of victory. In the very service of Good Friday itself, amidst all the signs of mourning, this note rings out gloriously in one of the noblest hymns of our liturgy, the *Vexilla Regis*; but nothing at the same time can be more untrue than to say that the aspect in which the early Christians "*invariably* viewed the Cross was that of triumph and exultation, of victory and of rapture." Dean Farrar's desire to win a cheap popularity among the Evangelicals and to provoke his fellow-Churchmen who are differently minded, must be keen indeed when it can induce him to bid defiance to history by statements so flagrantly and demonstrably false.

Strike out from our contemplations of Christ's Passion the sorrow and the sympathy, and it is a pitiable mockery that remains. The triumph is built upon the suffering, and without it we pass into a region of cant, illusion, and buffoonery far more repulsive than the most extravagant "emotionalism" of Mexico or Peru. At the opposite pole of the Good Friday observances to which I alluded at the commencement of this pamphlet, we note such a record as the following:

Dr. Parker as usual [says the *Daily Telegraph*, April 13, 1895] opened the City Temple to a vast congregation, who were regaled with abundant music and fervent oratory. The features of the service were duets by two tiny girls from the other side of the Atlantic, and hymns sung by three African children. One of these, a coal-black Christian of five, standing on a chair under the pulpit, sang with much spirit, "Dare to be a Daniel." On his concluding, Dr. Parker kindly invited any one who thought he could do it better to "come on." A spirit of decorous jollity characterized this novel Good Friday service.

As the irreverent buffooneries of the City Temple are to the sober ritual befitting the House of God, so it seems to me is the flippant and reckless extravagance of Dean Farrar's invective to that grave earnestness and sense of responsibility which we expect in a preacher speaking on the most solemn day of the year about the closing scenes of Calvary. And the cause of the failure is the same in both cases. For both the Crucifix has lost all true significance. Both for Dr. Parker and for the newly created Dean of Canterbury, the appropriate emblem of Good Friday, as they conceive of it, would be, not a Crucifix, but a Hot Cross Bun.

# Savonarola and the Reformation.<sup>1</sup>

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## I. A Protest.

THE object of the writer of this paper is, as a Catholic priest, a Dominican Father, and a lover of truth, to vindicate the honoured memory of a loyal Catholic, a zealous priest, and a fervent Dominican; and in the name of historic truth, to enter a protest against words spoken by one of the many leaders of thought—of many thoughts, thoughts different and contradictory—in the Anglican Church. The words were spoken of one whom all Dominicans are proud to remember as a brother Dominican, a model Dominican, a zealous Dominican, a saintly son of their saintly Father—Jerome Savonarola, a man who four centuries ago professed the Rule which they profess, and wore the habit which they wear to-day. Would to God that all Dominicans kept that Rule as well, and wore that habit as worthily! Would to God that all Catholics were as staunch, as fervent, as loyal, as devoted to St. Peter's See, as he! Dr. Farrar, who to his many titles now adds that of Dean of Canterbury, lecturing at St. Margaret's, Westminster,<sup>2</sup> on the "Leaders of the Reformation," with unwarranted and unwarrantable assurance instanced Savonarola

<sup>1</sup> The substance of an Address delivered in St. Dominic's Priory Church, Haverstock Hill, Sunday, April 28, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Sunday, April 21, 1895.

as one of these. The conscience of the eminent preacher seemed to smite him as he coupled that most Catholic of Catholic names with the names of Huss, Melancthon, Calvin, or Luther; and so he qualified the title by saying that he was a "harbinger" rather than a "leader" of the Reformation.

Savonarola a leader of the Reformation! Savonarola a "harbinger" even of that inglorious event! To one who knows his age, his work, his aim, his end, it seems beyond the bounds of credulity that any man of acknowledged literary talent and historical research could have dreamed such a dream, and then that he could have had the effrontery in his waking moments to tell his dream as a sober fact to an audience of intelligent men. Well was it that the preacher prepared his listeners for bold flights of imagination by assuring them that his assertions rested upon the authority, in addition to the English translation of Villari, of a "noble and powerful romance!" The Dean called his address a lecture. The novelist, with greater candour than the lecturer, honestly calls her book, not a history, but "a novel," and states frankly in a note that the sermon which she quotes as preached by Savonarola is not really his, but "a free representation of his style of preaching in his more impassioned moods." Perhaps if Dean Farrar had read Burlamacchi, or Pico de la Mirandola, or Tournon, or Marchese, or Père Bayonne's *Étude*, or Savonarola's own works, which are many,<sup>1</sup> instead of George Eliot's novel, he might have hesitated before calling Savonarola the "harbinger" of that event which he himself would have denounced

<sup>1</sup> See list in Appendix No. I.

vigorously as an apostacy and as a religious revolt. Even Bayle, Calvinist first and Freethinker afterwards, remarks that "it is very strange that Protestants should number among their martyrs a friar who during his lifetime had always celebrated Mass and invoked the saints, and who at the hour of his death went to Confession and Communion, made an act of faith in the Real Presence, and humbly accepted a Plenary Indulgence granted him by the Pope."

## 2. Savonarola.

Let us first see *who* Savonarola was, and then we will return to the question raised by the Dean, *what* was he?

His was indeed a mysterious life, his a strange and chequered history. P. Molineri has put on record a saying attributed in Rome to Benedict XIV. who held the great Dominican in veneration: "If God gives me the grace to get to Heaven, as soon as I shall have consoled myself with the Beatific Vision, my curiosity will lead me to look for Savonarola." Pope Pius VII. is also reported to have said: "In Heaven three serious questions will be solved: the Immaculate Conception, the Suppression of the Society of Jesus, and the death of Savonarola."

In his *Lives of the Illustrious Men of the Dominican Order*,<sup>1</sup> Tournon thus summarizes his wonderful career:

Amongst the apostolic men in whose lives we have seen realized all that our Lord foretold to His first disciples, the renowned Jerome Savonarola holds high rank. His natural gifts soon won the admiration of learned men as

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire des Hommes Illustres de l'Ordre de S. Dominique*, tom. iii. liv. xxiii. Edit. Paris, 1746.

well as of ordinary people. The purity of his life, and the greatness of his virtues gained for him the esteem, respect, and confidence of the faithful. The zeal for the house of God which fired him soon urged him to undertake great works of piety; and the success which crowned his efforts soon began to excite men's envy. His supernatural gifts, his earnest and pathetic sermons, his many writings so full of light and fervour, all increased the number both of his admirers and his enemies. His prophecies, although they were afterwards fulfilled, irritated his enemies and led them to seek a pretext to bring about his downfall. The city of Florence, after having for a long time listened to him with respect, after having hailed him as the restorer of its freedom, after having esteemed him as a man of God sent by Heaven to teach the people to walk in the way of justice, looked on with delight when he fell into the hands of his enemies, when he was condemned as a false prophet, and when he died upon the scaffold. But the death of this truly great man was another proof that he had spoken by the Spirit of God. . . The greatness of soul, and the strength of mind which he had shown all his life, remained with him to the end, he sealed with his blood the truth of his prophecies, which came to pass even in his lifetime. Despite the intrigues, and the shameful prejudice of those who have tried to blacken his memory, that memory has been to many as an odour of life. Many disciples have followed in their Master's footsteps. Great men and holy men have given public witness to his innocence. Several of his bitterest foes have become his staunch admirers. His friends, far from being shocked at his death, have been strengthened by it in their belief in his sanctity. His enemies have become his apologists, and his friends his historians, and one and the other have given to posterity some idea of the edifying life of this servant of God.

The family of Savonarola originally belonged to Padua, but he himself was born at Ferrara on the 21st of September, 1452. His early years were spent in study. "He made good progress in Grammar and Latinity," says Burlamacchi, and afterwards, when his

father made him apply to the study of liberal sciences, he showed rare talent and acute perception, "and in a short time he surpassed his fellow-students. Nor did he profit less in the study of good manners and of holy morals. While yet in his tender years it was his delight to be alone, employing himself in making little altars and performing acts of devotion." In due course he began to study Theology, giving much time to this, always to him a congenial pursuit. He soon lost all taste for the study of Platonic Philosophy so much in vogue in the Renaissance. He refers to this in after-life in one of his sermons: "I was then in the error of the schools, and I studied with great care the *Dialogues of Plato*, but when God brought me to see the true light, I cast away from me all those vain ideas which filled my mind. What real profit is there in all the wisdom of Philosophy, if a poor old woman, established in the faith, knows more of true wisdom than Plato?"

At the age of twenty he was deeply moved at the sight of the wickedness of men, and an earnestness took possession of his soul which in after-years found vent in that flood of burning eloquence which fascinated and yet terrified, which made men fear and yet love him. It was at this time that he gave expression to the feelings of sorrow which were swelling as a torrent within him, in his poem *De Ruina Mundi*, in which he speaks of the misery of the world, and then asks as if in holy impatience:

How long, O Lord, those scenes wilt Thou endure  
Of riot on the part of those who deem  
Their usurpation sanctioned and secure  
While Thy true servants suffer daily more and more?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Madden's translation. *Life and Martyrdom of Savonarola.*



It was at this time too, or perhaps two or three years later, that he wrote his other poem, *De Ruina Ecclesiæ*, in which he bewails the misfortunes that have come upon the Church in the infidelity and tepidity of her children.

O thou chaste Virgin ! thy unworthy son  
 (Since thy Eternal Spouse approves that claim)  
 In sadness oft recalls those times bygone,  
 Of glorious perils, martyrdoms, of fame  
 For ignominious death, of the bright flame  
 Of faith. Alas ! those times exist no more,  
 Zeal there is none : the men are not the same ;  
 Heroic Christian men they were of yore,  
 The pristine love must now be sought in Mary's core.

After recounting the lack of faith, of "the zone of chastity," "the evangelic themes," of "the worldly schemes by sacred persons planned," the "virtue still in rags, with pallid cheeks, with hair dishevelled, and with garment torn," he cries out in pity's pleading voice :

Weep for the wrongs religion has endured,  
 Ye aged men who stand around the throne,  
 Apostles, saints, disciples of the Lord,  
 Angels of Heaven, Evangelists look down.  
 Martyrs weep tears of blood ; there is not one  
 Of all the stars and planets unrestrained  
 In their swift course, exulting in each zone,  
 To speak as mortals feel, that is not pained  
 To see the Temple spoiled, and the white marble stained.

In the last stanza we seem to see the birth of his vocation to his future life so full of a pathos and zeal destined to be misunderstood :

Spirit of song, I know these strains of mine,  
 The scorpion sting of slander must endure ;  
 Or it may be that men will not divine  
 Their meaning, and perhaps 'tis even more  
 To be desired, they should my thoughts ignore—

For my own peace of mind—nay better too,  
Leave the dread struggle with abuse and power,  
And thus for quiet's sake the task forego,  
That seems to be imposed on me, for weal or woe.<sup>1</sup>

After reading these lines we are not surprised to find him, at the age of twenty-three, forming the resolution to leave the world for the cloister, a resolution which he put into effect on the 24th of April, 1475, by entering the Dominican Order in the convent at Bologna, where the body of the saintly Dominic lies under the 'stately tomb which was designed by Nicolò Pisano. Of his life here, which lasted seven years, Villari tells us :

While in the monastery he led a silent life, and became increasingly absorbed in spiritual contemplation. He was so worn by fasting and penance that, when pacing the cloisters, he seemed more like a spectre than a living man. The hardest tests of the novitiate seemed light to him, and his Superiors were frequently obliged to curb his zeal. Even on days not appointed for abstinence, he scarcely ate enough to support life. His bed was a grating with a sack of straw on it and one blanket ; his clothing of the coarsest kind but strictly clean ; in modesty, humility, and obedience, he surpassed all the rest of the brethren. The fervour of his devotion excited the wonder of the Superiors, and his brother monks often believed him to be rapt in a holy trance. The cloister walls seemed to have had the effect of restoring his peace of mind by separating him from the world, and to have purified him of all desires save for prayer and obedience.<sup>2</sup>

After his seven years' sojourn at Bologna, during which God was preparing him for his future work, he was sent, but only for a short time, to the Dominican Convent at Ferrara, his native place. Here "he lived as one dead to the world, seeing none of his acquaint-

<sup>1</sup> Madden's translation.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i. p. 20.

ances, and very little of his family, for fear of wakening his dormant affections. The streets, houses, and churches of his native town spoke to him of a past which he sought to banish from his mind."

He was finally appointed in the year 1481 to the Convent of San Marco, in Florence. Here he was destined to pass the happiest and the saddest days of his life. Here within these convent walls, or at least within the walls of the beautiful city, he was to spend the rest of his life, to make his name famous throughout Italy, and even Europe, to all time, and then to end his days by his strangely tragic death.

He was named Master of Novices and Professor of Theology, and afterwards was elected Prior, and later on appointed by his Superior Vicar-General of the Reformed Tuscan Province of his Order. He soon began to preach to the Florentine people. He was ignorant of the arts of oratory, and he despised the ornate artificial style of preaching then so much in vogue. The only law of rhetoric which he knew was the first and most important canon, without which the words of the preacher will be "as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals," and the preacher himself will be as one "beating the air," viz., "to preach well is to preach without art, but with heart." The people were accustomed to flowery phrases and rounded periods, and quotations from pagan poets, and they cared not for the new preacher who preached God and not himself, who spoke to their hearts rather than to their ears and mind. It sounds strangely to us now, in the light of his after-life, to hear Burlamacchi tell us that when he preached at Ferrara his fellow-citizens cared little for his preach-

ing, that at Bologna he was styled "a simple man and a preacher for women," and that in Florence, when preaching the Lent at San Lorenzo, "his congregation went on diminishing till at last towards the end of Lent, it was reduced to twenty-five persons including women and children."

Soon, however, the strings of his tongue were to be loosened, and the pent-up feelings of his great soul were to be poured out in a torrent of irresistible eloquence that was to go straight to the hearts of all. His audience was to be numbered not by units, or hundreds, but by thousands of eager earnest listeners, hungering for the bread which is God's word to man. He began to preach against the corruptions of a corrupt and corrupting age, against the evil wrought by the spirits of darkness in the high places, against the wickedness prevalent in the Church and in the State. He preached from a heart burning with zeal for souls that were perishing. To use the words of Cardinal Newman in his sermon on *The Mission of St. Philip*:

A true son of St. Dominic in energy, in severity of life, in contempt of merely secular learning, a forerunner of St. Pius V. in boldness, in resoluteness, in zeal for the honour of the house of God, and for the restoration of holy discipline, Savonarola felt "his spirit stirred up within him" like another Paul, when he came to that beautiful home of genius and philosophy; for he found Florence like another Athens "wholly given to idolatry." He groaned within him, and was troubled, and refused consolation, when he beheld a Christian Court and people priding itself on its material greatness, its intellectual gifts, and its social refinements, while it abandoned itself to luxury, to feast and song and revel, to fine shows and splendid apparel, to an impure poetry, to a depraved and sensual character of

art, to heathen speculations, and to forbidden, superstitious practices. His vehement spirit could not be restrained, and got the better of him, and . . . he burst into a whirlwind of indignation and invective against all that he found in Florence, and condemned the whole established system and all who took part in it, high and low, prince or peasant, ecclesiastic or layman, with a pitiless rigour which for the moment certainly did a great deal more than St. Paul was able to do at the Areopagus; for St. Paul only made one or two converts there, and departed, whereas Savonarola had great immediate success, frightened and abashed the offenders, rallied round him the better disposed, and elicited and developed whatever there was of piety, whether in the multitude or in the upper class. It was the truth of his cause, the earnestness of his convictions, the singleness of his aims, the impartiality of his censures, the intrepidity of his menaces, which constituted the secret of his success.

His words, aided by penance and prayer, and inspired by the love of God and man, went with the straightness and swiftness of an arrow to the hearts of men—of men too of every grade.

And now came the triumph of his life, the fruit of his penance, zeal, and prayer. His audiences outgrew the capacities of the largest churches in Florence, the great Duomo or Cathedral of the city—Sta. Maria dei Fiori, the masterpiece of Arnolfo di Campio's and Giotto's combined skill, vast though it is, was too small to contain the thousands who flocked to hear his impassioned words.

Not only did his sermons attract multitudes to the foot of his pulpit, they sent them away changed in heart and in the purpose of their life. The whole city assumed an altered aspect—the houses became as convents, the streets as religious cloisters, the squares as monastic quadrangles. His words, as

divine seeds, bore the fruits of sanctity in the lives of the Florentine people. The churches were filled with devout worshippers; the confessionals were thronged with penitents; the very streets resounded to the music of hymns and psalms. The people were beside themselves with enthusiasm. The scenes described in the Acts of the Apostles when the primitive Christians had but "one heart and soul in the Lord," were re-enacted. Men sold their goods and gave the proceeds to the needy. They formed themselves into a Christian commonwealth of which practically, though not nominally, Savonarola was the head. "Piero de' Medici is no longer fit to rule the State," they said: "the Republic must provide for itself; the moment has come to shake off the baby Government." They shook it off, and a new and Christian Government was formed under the guidance of Savonarola, who, though he had no seat in the Council, no voice in the chamber of State, yet from the pulpit of Sta. Maria dei Fiori, virtually and by his influence was the lawgiver and ruler of the people.

Things went on well for a time, peace was restored, piety flourished, charity triumphed over selfish lawlessness, religion was respected—"They had one heart and one soul in the Lord." But it was only for a time—the change was but as a passing one, the peaceful reform effected without shedding of blood was but as a lull before the storm. Enemies arose about him to plot and plan secretly—yes, and openly—till they could bring about his downfall. He had enemies—who that tries to do good has not? "I know who the real authors of these

troubles are," he wrote to a brother Religious in Rome, "they are wicked citizens who would raise themselves to power, and they have as their accomplices certain princes of Italy. They all wish to get rid of me whatever the cost, they think that my presence here is an obstacle to their ambition, . . . so much so that I cannot leave my convent without an escort. I do not think that His Holiness would wish me to go to Rome if he knew all," . . . and then he adds with true religious instinct: "*I will obey, even though my obedience should result in the ruin of the entire world, for I would not sin in this matter even venially.*"<sup>1</sup> Pico della Mirandola tells us: "When the fame of his holiness grew, with it envy grew, and from envy came calumnies; for as his virtue won for him friends, so did it make enemies. . . . Amongst his most bitter foes were those, prelates of the Church some of them, who by their evil lives were giving scandal."<sup>2</sup> He had preached against them; he had spoken openly of their sins; he had said with the Baptist: *Non licet*—"It is not lawful." Like Herodias, they would be content with nothing but his head—and his head they received.

The story of his downfall is a long one and a sad one. Much has been written about it, but perhaps the last word has not yet been said. No one can doubt his zeal, no one can call in question the holiness of his life and the singleness of his purpose. If he had a fault—and who has not?—it was excess of zeal, and excess is always sin. If he erred—and who has not erred in less trying surroundings than his?—

<sup>1</sup> Père Bayonne, *Étude*, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Vita Savonarola*, cap. ix.



his error was an error of judgment, and not of will. "I will obey, even though from my obedience shall result the ruin of the entire world," that was the expression of his will. If when the hour came to test his firm resolve, he failed—he had explained before why he failed: "If His Holiness knew all he would not ask me to go to Rome." Better for him, better for his memory, had he obeyed, even though "the ruin" had followed. *Fiat justitia ruat cælum*—"Let justice be done even though the heavens should fall." Obedience to legitimate authority in a Catholic—a priest especially and a Religious—is always *justice*, even though the one who holds authority be not what he should. In a short memoir it is not possible to enter into the long and sad history of his apparent collision with Pope Alexander VI. We shall have to refer to it later on, but it can only be *currente calamo*, in a brief and hurried way. Any one who wishes to study the question more profoundly may do so in Père Bayonne's *Étude sur Jérôme Savonarole*, or in Pico della Mirandola, his contemporary, who held him in deepest veneration, or in his Dominican biographer, Tournon.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that his enemies, both ecclesiastic and lay, whose lives he had condemned and against whose abuses he had inveighed with such terribly scathing words, accused him to the Pope of heresy, of which (as we shall see) he was innocent; of disobedience, which certainly was not of the will; and of imprudent zeal of which he was perhaps guilty, for zeal without prudence is guilt. He was forbidden to preach. For a time he obeyed and was silent, preaching only with his prolific

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire des Hommes Illustres de l'Ordre de S. Dominique*, tom. iii.

pen. But seeing the misery around, and listening to the appeals of the people and rulers of Florence, he got into the pulpit again and denounced once more in words of terrible force the evil lives of men, threatening them with vengeance to come. Here was his fault. Savonarola in his humble cell, kneeling before his crucifix, praying for men, would have been a more eloquent preacher than Savonarola in the pulpit moving the people, by words of might and power, to tears and sorrow for sin. Savonarola's obedient silence would have been a more powerful sermon to all time than Savonarola's words when spoken against the will of Rome. "Doth the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather that the voice of God be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifices; and to hearken rather than offer the fat of rams. Because it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey," Samuel said to Saul. "And Saul said to Samuel: I have sinned, because I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and thy words, fearing the people and obeying their voice. . . . And Samuel said to Saul: I will not return with thee, because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord; and the Lord hath rejected thee from being King over Israel. And Samuel turned to go away; and he laid hold of the skirt of his mantle and it rent. And Samuel said: The Lord shall rend from thee the kingdom of Israel this day."<sup>1</sup>

The question of Savonarola's conduct in this trying time is shrouded in mystery—with Pius VII. we await its solution in Heaven. Evidence is contradictory, friends defend him, foes accuse him, but no

<sup>1</sup> I Kings xv. 22—26.

historian brings against him the charge of either heresy or schism ; at most he was disobedient under circumstances most trying to a man of earnest faith and burning love. If he was disobedient, every Catholic, whether he venerate his memory or join with those who would cast a shadow over a glorious name, must admit that his disobedience was a flaw in the crystal, a black thread in the white-woven web.

If he was disobedient, how terribly did he pay the penalty of his sin ; it was burnt away in fire, it was washed out in blood ! “The Lord hath rejected thee from being King over Israel.” His power was broken, his influence gone. Through the misrepresentations of his enemies, the Pope was induced to issue a sentence of excommunication against him, an action, it is said, which Alexander VI. lived to regret when the clouds had passed and the light was revealed.<sup>1</sup> A reaction set in, a revulsion of feeling such as we see sometimes in the history of Italy and the lives of her children, and one which it is difficult to understand. The very Florentines, though many were true to the end, turned against him. They whose idol he had been, to whom his will had been law, whose every word had been as a pearl from Heaven, sided with his foes. They elected to the Signory, or Council, men who were known to be his foes. He was tried before the Pope’s Commissioners by the magistrates of Florence. He made no attack on his judges, no attempt at self-defence. “He was tried on three points : *religion, politics, and his prophecies.*” In his replies he solemnly denied ever having taught any but the Catholic faith, though

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix No. 2.

he admitted having preached against the abuses of men. His political creed he summed up in a few words: "My sole aim was to promote free government and all measures tending to its improvement." When asked about his prophecies, he replied: "Leave this matter alone; for if it was of God, ye will receive manifest proofs of it; if of man, it will fall to the ground. Whether I be a prophet or not is no concern of the State." Answers were of no avail, his sentence had already been decreed; and the sentence was, "he must die."

His end was "tragic,"—that is the word all his biographers use. It is said that in 1479 St. Francis of Paula foretold of his death, which occurred in 1498. "He shall be hated, envied, accused unjustly to the Sovereign Pontiff, condemned to death on false testimony, and be hung between two of his brethren." So was it done; but over that tragic death we prefer to draw a veil—it is a credit to no one, an honour to none.

According to the barbarous customs of those days, he was tortured and then handed over to the secular power and ruthlessly done to death, "strangled, hung on a gibbet, and then burned in the very square where he had set fire to the costly furniture of vanity and sin; having previously made his confession, received Holy Communion, and accepted a Plenary Indulgence sent by the Pope." This was on the eve of the Ascension, the 23rd day of May, 1498, he being then but forty-five years of age.

In one of his sermons he had said: "My teaching has revived faith and virtue in your town. Is not this true, good people? Do you not bear me witness

that a few years ago Florence was plunged in the darkness of paganism?" Savonarola was put to death, and Florence returned to her paganism again. "The rich and powerful family (the Medici) returned to Florence, and things went on pretty much as before."

### 3. Savonarola *not* the "harbinger" of the Reformation.

Such was Savonarola's life. What was his work? What *rôle* did he fill in the religious world of men? What were his "views" upon the vital subject of religion and creed? We need not ask: "Was he a Catholic or a Protestant?" for there were no Protestants then. Luther was a little Catholic boy of twelve when Savonarola died; Henry Tudor, afterwards Henry VIII., was a good Catholic too, and remained so for many years, even after he became King. No; those who believed in God at all and in His Incarnate Son belonged to one Church—for there was only one—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." All said, and said truthfully: "I believe in ONE, Holy, Catholic Church." Savonarola then was a Catholic, Catholic to the heart's core, Catholic to the very marrow of his bones; Catholic in life, Catholic in death. Did he wish to be anything else? Did he aspire to any change? Did he dream of any evolution by which his Catholic Church should be transformed into another, with a different name, a different creed, a different system of government, a different head?

Dean Farrar would have us think so, at least if we may judge by his words, if the words were spoken

seriously, not merely to tickle ears and to please men's fancy, but to convince their minds and form their judgment, and that too not on a point of doctrine, but an historic fact. Sooth to say, the Dean is not the first who has been guilty of this assumption, an assumption as unjust as it is unjustifiable. Madden, in his Preface to the *Life and Martyrdom of Savonarola*, says: "Protestants claim him for their creed, as the precursor of Luther. Luther himself claimed him for it; so did Flaccius, Beza, Heidegger, Arnold, Fabricius, and in later times, Milner, Heraut, and Hafe."<sup>1</sup>

Visitors to Worms, too, will recall Luther's monument, with Huss on his right and Savonarola on his left. Well is it for Luther's monument that the statue of Savonarola is *lifeless*, else Rütshell would not long recognize the design as his own! Well that "those lips have not language," else Luther's admirers might hear such words as these: "He who shall contumaciously assert that *the Roman Church is not the head of all Churches* cannot be absolved by an ordinary priest, . . . because *such a man is a heretic and therefore excommunicated*."<sup>2</sup>

*Savonarola was no "leader," no "precursor," no "harbinger" of Luther or of Luther's work.*—If a man is a "harbinger" or precursor of a movement, surely he must prepare for, or foretell ("forthtell" the Dean would say) that movement in his words, his principles, his works, or in the practice of his life. What our Dominican hero forethought, or "forthtold," we cannot say, but we do not believe that even in the loftiest

<sup>1</sup> P. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Savonarola's *Instruction for Confessors*. Roman Edition, 1517.

flights of his vivid Italian imagination he ever supposed that men of sense would try to reform branches of the Church by uprooting the tree altogether, that they would try to remedy the accidental defects of the "house built upon a rock" by endeavouring to destroy its very foundations. If he forethought of these men at all, it would have been as of "heretics" whom he ought to "avoid;" if he "forthtold" of their work, it must have been as of heresy, and of schism, and of sin. What he forecasted we know not, but this we know, and this we say, and we do not speak on the authority of a "romance," however "noble and powerful"—his life, his preaching, his work, his very death are all protests against Protestantism and condemnation of the pseudo-Reformation, for they are all in diametrical opposition to the life, preaching, teaching, and work of the pseudo-Reformer.

*Savonarola a Reformer of men and morals.*—Savonarola a Reformer! Yes, he was a reformer, not merely a "harbinger," not simply a "forthteller," but a *reformer*—a reformer, that is, in the true sense of the word. For there are two kinds of reformation in the Church. There is the reformation of men and morals, and in such a work Savonarola had a glorious part. Then there is a reformation, falsely so-called, of the Church herself, an attempt, that is, to reform God's work and not man's perversity, to change the constitution, the doctrine, the nature of that Church, against which the Divine Founder said: "The gates of Hell shall not prevail," to which He promised His abiding presence: "Lo, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world," in which



He foretold that the "Holy Ghost shall teach all truth," and which St. Paul describes in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians as being "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, . . . but . . . holy and without blemish." In other words, there are reformers of the evil lives of *men*, even of men in high places, in convent cells and sanctuary stalls, and episcopal sees, and on the Papal chair—for neither laymen, nor monks, nor priests, nor Bishops, nor Popes are impeccable; and there are pseudo-reformers of a Church which is the work of God, a work outside the pale of man's reforming.

Savonarola was a reformer of men and morals we grant you; but never did he presume even in the most impassioned moments of his matchless eloquence, which made women faint for fear and strong men quiver visibly, never did he presume to "touch the sacred ark of God," never did he *imply* even that the Church, as a Church, *could* have "spot or wrinkle"—priests, Bishops, Popes, yes; but not "the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of truth." The Protestant Sismondi admits that "Savonarola in no way departed from Catholic teaching, but confined his efforts to the restoration of morals and discipline." No! "Like Noah, like Abraham, like Samuel, and Amos, and Isaiah, and all the best of the Hebrew Prophets, like John the Baptist, and Peter and Paul, and James and John" (we quote the Dean's words), "Savonarola instructed his people in godly living;" but unlike Huss and Melancthon, and Calvin and Luther, he never preached against the doctrines of the Church, the tenets of Catholic faith, the definitions

which form our doctrinal creed. Villari, one of his biographers, the one to whom the Dean refers, sums it up in a word, and we commend that word to the Dean: "In fact, Savonarola's attacks were never directed in the slightest degree against *the dogmas of the Roman Church*, but against *those who corrupted them*." <sup>1</sup>

The Protestant historian, Sismondi, admits again with historic candour that "in seeking to reform the Church, Savonarola never wandered from Catholic principles, . . . that he did not claim the right of private judgment in dogmatic questions, . . . and that he devoted all his efforts to the restoration of *discipline*, to the reformation of the lives of the clergy, and to the winning of priests and laymen to a more perfect observance of the Gospel laws." <sup>2</sup>

1. *He was a reformer of morals and men.*—Unlike the false Reformers of the sixteenth century, this reformer of the fifteenth began his reformation with *himself*. Luther, the father of the German Reformation, on his own admission, did not reform himself. He began his work by breaking his vows made to God, and by inducing another vowed Religious to throw off her religious obligations and join herself to him in a wedlock which was sacrilegious; and his after-life we know, for he has revealed it to us in his *Table-talk* and elsewhere. Of Henry VIII., the father of the English Reformation, we need say nothing to English readers. Nay, of the private lives of one and the other we must be silent, lest our words should

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de la Renaissance de la Liberté en Italie*, c. xiii.

defile your eyes and mind, gentle reader, and our paper and pen.

But look at Savonarola's life—how pure! how blameless! At the age of twenty-two, after a youth of innocence at which no one can "cast a stone," he enters the Dominican Order, and he tells us why he did so in a pathetic letter of farewell which he wrote to his father :

The motive which decides me to enter Religion is simply this : the wretched misery of the world, the wickedness of men, their thefts, impurities, robberies, the pride, idolatry, and shocking blasphemies which stain our age to such a degree that we hardly find any one trying to lead a good life. Hence, many times daily, these lines come before my mind and bring tears to my eyes :

Fly from this heartless land,  
Fly from this covetous shore.

And, indeed, I can no longer endure the appalling wickedness that exists in parts of Italy. Everywhere piety is despised, and vice is honoured. What keener sorrow can this life ever bring me? And, therefore, day after day I have implored our Lord Jesus Christ to draw me from the abyss, and my heart is unceasingly crying out to God : "Show me the way in which I should walk, for unto Thee have I lifted up my soul." In His infinite pity God has deigned to show me this way, and I have entered upon it, although it is a grace of which I am utterly unworthy.

He took the vows that Luther took, though not in the same Order, and he kept them to the letter, and to the very inmost spirit, until the hour of his death, when kissing the scapular, the distinctive badge of his Order, he exclaimed : "O holy habit, which I have preserved unsullied to this hour, since they take thee from me—adieu."

No one, either friend or foe, tries to "convince" Savonarola of sin. Whether at Bologna, near the tomb of the holy Dominic, or at Florence, in the Convent of San Marco, redolent of the sanctity of St. Antoninus, and from whose frescoed walls Fra Angelico preached then, as now, sermons which never lack eloquence and power, his was a blameless life. His black robe of penance and his white robe of innocence covered a heart all aglow with love of God and of man. With his wallet and staff and Bible when travelling on foot; and at home in his convent, his tiny cell, still shown, with its humble table and simple wooden chair and hard, comfortless bed, what a contrast was his life to the luxurious life of an Anglican dignitary!

He seems almost to have "forthtold" their lives: "What am I to say of clerics and priests of the Church who ought to practise greater frugality than laymen, and whose duty it is to provide for the poor? I must rather weep for them than speak to them. The whole world knows how much they possess that is superfluous, and how lavishly they spend money as they choose. With what conscience will such as they be able to stand before the terrible tribunal of Christ?"<sup>1</sup>

2. He was a reformer again of his Order, and his zeal was appreciated to the full. Elected unanimously as Prior by his brethren, his Superiors afterwards appointed him Vicar-General of the Reformed Tuscan Congregation of his Order—a Congregation, or

<sup>1</sup> *The Simplicity of a Christian Life*, Eighth Conclusion. Roman Edition, 1517.

Province, which numbered some three hundred members—and this office he preserved to the end.

3. And what a marvellous reformer of the people, who in very deed needed a reform. Like another Jeremias, he lamented : “The ways of Sion weep, for there is none that cometh to the solemn feast.” Like another Baptist, he cried out with fiery zeal : “Do penance, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” “O Italy! O Florence! on account of thy sins, calamities come upon thee. Hasten to return to the Lord thy God, for He is good and merciful to thee.” His sermons are matters of history. How that people rose at midnight, and waited for hours at the Cathedral doors, weeping and praying. The vast and spacious Duomo was too small. They erected galleries, and it was packed from tiled floor to vaulted roof, and many had to return to their homes, for still there was no room. Then his burning, weird words, so full of might and power, his terrible warnings, his fiery eloquence, his majestic gestures! He swayed the people as he would. They wept audibly, they cried aloud for mercy, they trembled visibly. It was as though an angel had come down and moved the waters of compunction in the hearts of men. It was as though one spoke who had come from another world. It was as if Elias had come from Horeb, or the Baptist from the desert place. Then the strange scenes that followed the sermons! Women reformed their dress. Youths forgot their light songs, and sang hymns in the street instead. People met together to recite the Offices and Psalms. Then they brought their articles of vanity, beautiful pictures, figures carved in ivory and alabaster, lutes, flutes, guitars,

perfumes, masks, books, and poems. "There were tapestries and brocades of immodest design, pictures and sculptures held too likely to incite to vice ; there were boards and tables for all sorts of games, playing-cards, along with the blocks for printing them, dice, and other apparatus for gambling ; there were worldly music-books and musical instruments, . . . there were handsome copies of Ovid, Boccaccio, Petrarcha, Pulci . . . there were all the implements of feminine vanity—rouge-pots, false hair, mirrors, perfumes, powders and transparent veils, intended to provoke inquisitive glances."<sup>1</sup> All these were made into a great pyre, or pyramid, in the Piazza della Signoria. A stranger—a Venetian merchant, it is said—offered 20,000 crowns for the pyramid as it stood. No ! they burnt them all as a holocaust of penance, in token of their sorrow and abandonment of sin.

Here was a reformer indeed ! Had Luther done this, had he effected such a change, then he too would have been—what he was not—a reformer. He tells us the result of his preaching in a sermon delivered at Wittenberg in 1553: "Since the preaching of our doctrine, the world becomes worse and worse, more impious, more shameless. Men are more avaricious, more impure than they were formerly under the Papacy. Everywhere avarice, immodesty, drunkenness, disgraceful disorders, and abominable passions." Again he writes : "Hardly have we begun to preach our Gospel, than we see in the country a fearful revolution, schisms, sects, and everywhere complete ruin of morality and order. Licence and all kinds of vice have been carried to greater excess

<sup>1</sup> *Romola*.

than under the Papacy. People who formerly were true to duty, now know no restraint or check, and live as an untamed horse would, without restraint or shame, and are a prey to the vilest pleasures."

4. Savonarola would, in fine, have reformed men in high places in the Church as well as in the State. This is what he meant by the reform of the Church—of the members, that is, of the Church. The reform, indeed, was demanded in the cloister, in the sanctuary, in the houses of prelates and doctors, as he puts it so pithily: "In the primitive Church the chalices were of wood, and the prelates of gold: but now the chalices are of gold, and the prelates of wood."<sup>1</sup> But here he failed, and in his failing fell. It needed more than an Apostle, it needed a Council of the Church to reform the Church's Episcopacy. Savonarola tried, but failed. The Council of Trent tried in after-years, and succeeded. He tried, and all glory to his effort! He was a reformer in the truest sense, a reformer of morals and men. Such reformers are men of God. Such was St. Bernard, such was St. Dominic, such St. Philip Neri, such St. Charles Borromeo. Such was Savonarola—a reformer of morals and men.

*Savonarola not a reformer of Doctrine or Creed.*—He was a true reformer, a reformer of the evil ways of men, "the support of his family, the ruler of his brethren, the stay of the people."<sup>2</sup> Yes, but let us repeat again and again, in no sense did he pose, did he pretend, did he presume to be, as they did in the sixteenth century, a renovator of creed, a sower of

<sup>1</sup> *De Simplicitate Vitæ Christianæ.*

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. iv. 9.



new doctrines, a reformer of Christ's Immaculate Spouse. To use the words of Villari, whose *Life of Savonarola* the Dean professes to have read: "To regard him as the leader of a party, a sect, or a system, is an error only to be committed by those unacquainted with the friar and his times."<sup>1</sup> Again: "It is impossible to read his books without being firmly convinced that, to the day of his death, Savonarola remained unswervingly faithful to the dogmas of his faith; and that instead of seeking to destroy the unity of the Church, it was his constant desire to render it more complete."<sup>2</sup> John Addington Symonds writes very appositely: "He was no apostle of reform. It did not occur to him to reconstruct the creed, to dispute the discipline, or to criticize the authority of the Church."<sup>3</sup> Even the Dean of Canterbury said recently at Westminster: "He was a preacher of righteousness, . . . he instructed his people in godly living. The priests had preached dogmas and ceremonies." He added significantly: "He never emancipated himself from the errors of Rome, though he never dwelt on them." Substitute "truth" for "error," and we agree with the words that he said: Savonarola never emancipated himself from Rome—nor would he. True, his sermons were especially, though not exclusively, sermons on moral subjects rather than dogmatic theses—why? Because he was a man of his age, because he was abreast of his times, and he preached to suit the needs of his day. If they asked for bread, he did not give them a stone; if they demanded a fish, he did not give

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 418.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *A Short History of the Renaissance in Italy.*

them a serpent. We in England have to preach dogma "in season and out of season," and why? Because the English people have wandered from dogmatic truth. They have been told that dogma is synonymous with bigotry. "Blind guides have led the blind," and leaders and led have fallen into the pit of ignorance of Divine truth. In Italy, in the fifteenth century, men were "believers," but not "doers of the Word," and so the Apostle of Italy had to preach not faith, but practice; he had to be a reformer of practical morality, therefore had he to be in all, and above all, a preacher of righteousness and of godly living.

But Savonarola has left in his writings, notably in his *Triumph of the Cross*, which is from first to last a dogmatic treatise, and in his spoken words, which happily remain to us, his dogmatic belief. And what was it? A creed diametrically at variance with the Gospel of the so-called "reformers." As he differed from them *toto cælo* in the practical piety of his life, so did he in the preaching of the Word. His religious creed was the antithesis of theirs. He taught the very doctrines upon which they made shipwreck of their faith.

His text-book was the *Summa* of the Dominican, St. Thomas of Aquin, that book of which Popes have said that it is "blessed and Catholic" (Urban V.), that it is "the light of the Church" (Nicholas V.), and that "the Roman Church professes to follow its teaching" (Innocent XII.); that book which the Fathers of the Council of Trent placed on the table next to the Holy Gospels as their most beautiful commentary. Pico della Mirandola attributes the

vocation of Savonarola to the Dominican Order to his love and admiration for St. Thomas.<sup>1</sup> The same contemporary biographer assures us that a year before his death he wrote: "Of St. Thomas I will say three things: I venerated him when I was in the world; I am ignorant, but what I do know I learned from his teaching; and the more I study his writings, the more convinced I become that he is a giant, and the rest are dwarfs." What wonder then that under the guidance of St. Thomas he preached doctrines totally at variance with what is called the "reformed creed." We will pass over the abstract questions of grace, and justification, and original sin.

*Good Works.*—On the important question of good works and their necessity, in contradistinction to the Reformer's teaching of justification by faith alone, he says clearly: "Every one shall have according to his works;" and in one of his sermons<sup>2</sup> he cries out: "Do you want Jesus Christ to be your friend? Answer His Divine appeal. Your Lord asks you to give Him your heart. Do something for Him then."

*Church Authority.*—The Reformers separated themselves from the Church, denying her authority, despising her excommunications, casting her commands to the winds. How different was the teaching, preaching, and practice of Savonarola! The fourth book of the *Triumph of the Cross* is a complete vindication of Church authority, treating as it does of its Divine institution, its hierarchy, its power from on high, and its perpetual life even to the end of time. "All that the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church has decided, and all that she may decide in future time,

<sup>1</sup> C. iii.

<sup>2</sup> xvi.

we must accept ; and all that she despises, or may hereafter despise and condemn, we must reject ; for in any doubt she is the one whom we consult as our first principle, as *the infallible rule* which God has established for the good of our soul.”<sup>1</sup> “Mayest thou always submit to the correction of *the Roman Church*, . . . *that Church in which there is no error.*”<sup>2</sup> “The right eye is faith, . . . it consists especially in following the teaching of the Church of Rome. . . . Never separate yourself from her obedience. . . . Always pay attention to what she lays down, . . . for it is written : ‘Thou art Peter, and upon thee will I build My Church.’ ”<sup>3</sup>

*The Sacraments.*—The Reformers’ teaching on the subject of the sacraments is summed up in the twenty-fifth of the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Articles which, whether sections of the Anglicans agree with them or not, form the authoritative profession of faith of the members of “the Church by law established” in England. The Article runs thus : “Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God’s good-will towards us, by the which He doth work invisibly in us. . . . There are *two* sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord. . . . Those five commonly called sacraments, . . . are not to be counted as sacraments,” &c.

Savonarola, on the other hand, distinctly teaches, following the doctrine of the Catholic Church, that

<sup>1</sup> C. ix.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon on Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension.

<sup>3</sup> Marchese, p. 177.

there are seven sacraments, and that the five which the Article rejects *are* to be "counted as sacraments," sacraments too "of the Gospel." He proves this by analogy in almost the words of St. Thomas, in the sixteenth chapter of the fourth book of *The Triumph of the Cross*. He maintains again that all these seven sacraments are means and instruments of grace: "The sacraments are instruments, the means made use of by Jesus Christ to work out our salvation. . . . And since no one can be saved without grace, it is fitting that these sacraments should, as instrumental causes, give grace."<sup>1</sup>

*Confession of sin.*—Although Luther has written: "I esteem auricular confession, as well as chastity and virginity, most salutary;" although he has exclaimed: "What would be the affliction of the Christian if there were no auricular confession?" and although Calvin said: "By means of private confession, pardon is obtained from those to whom Christ has said, All that you have loosed," &c.;<sup>2</sup> and although the Book of Common Prayer gives the form of absolution to be used by "the priest" after "a special confession of sin," still no one can deny—Dean Farrar will frankly admit it—that until recent years the teaching and practice of the ministers and people of the Lutheran, Calvinistic, and English Protestant Churches, were most emphatically opposed to confession, in theory and in fact. Of late, it is true, a large, and increasingly large number of Protestants, have returned to this pre-Reformation creed and practice. Still the Protestant Church, as a Church, condemns confession as a distinctive doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church,

<sup>1</sup> Marchese, c. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Inst.* bk. iii. c. iv.

and holds it to be unnecessary for the forgiveness of sin.

Savonarola's doctrine on the point is as clear and incisive as his practice was indisputable. In a letter on frequent Communion he says: "I presuppose before everything that the communicant has had his conscience cleansed from sins by true contrition and an *integral confession*." In the third book of *The Triumph of the Cross*, he writes :

As the inflicting of punishment for sin requires legal judgment, so it is necessary for the penitent, who submits himself to Christ to be healed, to await judgment in the taxing of the punishment ; and that judgment Christ makes known through His ministers, as He does in the other sacraments. But since right judgment cannot be pronounced on unknown sin, CONFESSION IS NEEDED as the second part of the sacrament, so that *the wound*, which was concealed but is now *laid bare before the minister of Christ*, may receive a fitting healing. No one indeed is a fair judge in his own cause. And so it must be that if this confession is subjected to judgment, the *minister of Christ has a judicial power*, for which two things are required, first *authority* to know and inquire into the sin, and secondly, *the power of absolving and condemning*. These then are the two-fold keys of the Church : authority with the science of discerning, and the faculty of binding and loosing. Since then (as has been said) the sacraments as instruments confer grace, it is certain that by virtue of the keys is granted a fuller effect of grace itself and remission than by contrition only. In the benefit of the keys too, somewhat of the temporal punishment which remains due is remitted by the absolving ministers of Christ, to the penitent, who still, when satisfaction is enjoined on him, is bound to the residue ; and this is the third part of the Sacrament of Penance. Therefore it is manifest that this *sacrament has been most opportunely instituted*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C xvi.

Once more :

The first part of the Sacrament of Penance is *contrition*, which being an effect of grace, produces many results : it does away with the separation from God which sin had brought about, it repairs the evil caused by sin, the debt of eternal punishment, and lastly it helps the soul to struggle against bad habits, for it supplies an abundance of grace inclining the soul to do good and strengthening it against evil. But because contrition is not the same in all, for all have not the same good-will and entire conversion to God, and because imperfect dispositions cannot entirely take away the debt of punishment due to sin (although the Sacrament of Penance always does away with the debt of eternal punishment), *God in His loving mercy has provided the two remaining parts of the sacrament, to wit, confession and satisfaction.*<sup>1</sup>

Villari (the Dean's authority) reminds us that just before Savonarola died he wrote on a bookcover, for lack of paper, a *Rule for Virtuous Living*, in which he says, "To examine one's sins, to meditate, . . . Confession and Communion incline our hearts to receive grace."<sup>2</sup>

This theoretical teaching was realized in the practice of his life. According to a law of his Order then in force, made in the General Chapter held at Bologna, in 1252, he was obliged to go to confession always before saying Mass ; and as a Superior, it was his duty to see that this ordination was observed by those under his care.<sup>3</sup> Villari again tells us, that when he was in prison, there "came one of the black brethren of St. Benedict to receive the prisoner's confession, and Savonarola kneeling before him fulfilled all the duties of religion with much fervour. It was the same with the other two friars."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii. p. 389.

<sup>3</sup> *Const. O.P.* dist. I. cap. I.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. ii. p. 398.



*Transubstantiation.*—One of the doctrines strenuously denied by the Reformers, was “Transubstantiation ;” the twenty-eighth of the Thirty-Nine Articles puts it clearly as the Protestant creed : Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of bread and wine) cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture. Savonarola, on the other hand, says in his *Triumph of the Cross*,<sup>1</sup> and much the same words occur in his *Treatise on the Sacrament and the Mysteries of the Mass* :

We believe, and we declare, that under the appearances of bread, no matter how small they may be, is the Body of Christ, whole and entire, and that also under the appearances of wine, even in the smallest drop, is the Blood of Christ, whole and entire ; and we believe that Jesus Christ, whole and entire, is at the same time in Heaven. We say that the Body and Blood of Christ are present in the Blessed Eucharist in virtue of the words of consecration, not because He comes there from somewhere else, but because the substance is changed. By the power of the words by which Transubstantiation takes place, there is in the Eucharist the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine, because that is the meaning of Transubstantiation ; but by natural concomitance, there is also the Soul and Divinity.

Then he taught the same in the practice of his life, every day saying Mass and spending long hours before the Blessed Sacrament. On the morning of his death Mass was said in his presence, and he received Holy Communion for the last time. Why, even in the “noble and powerful romance” he is represented on more than one occasion as giving Holy Communion and carrying the Blessed Sacrament.

<sup>1</sup> Bk. iii. c. 17.

*Devotion to Mary and the Saints.*—On the subject of the invocation of saints, and especially of the “Queen of All Saints,” Mary the Divine Mother, we know the views of the Reformers; it is “a fond thing vainly invented, and founded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”<sup>1</sup> If Savonarola was “a harbinger of the Reformers,” he ought neither to have preached nor to have practised this devotion. If it was “a fond thing vainly invented,” it ought to have fallen under those anathemas which he, of all men, knew how to hurl with such unerring force against corruptions and abuses, “repugnant to the Word of God.” Was it so? Quite the reverse; he both preached and taught this devotion, and he himself was devout to Mary, God’s Mother, and the saints God’s favourite, because loyal, children.

The Dean of Canterbury said in the lecture to which we have so often alluded: “In the middle age the worship of the Virgin had practically superseded the worship of Christ, yet Savonarola *denounced it.*”

Let us clearly understand each other, that we may clearly reply. If by “worship” the Dean means the worship due to God, “a worship superseding the worship of God,” so do we, so does the Catholic Church denounce it. If he means a superstitious devotion, so do we and so does the Catholic Church repudiate it—all superstition. If he means the excess of devotion, so do we, and so does the Catholic Church say “anathema” to the excess. But if he means love, reverence, affection, devotion to that

<sup>1</sup> Article xxii.

woman of women, the Mother of God, to whom Jesus Christ gave the love, reverence, affection, and devotion of a life, this we deny: Savonarola both preached and practised such devotion even as we. It was his very devotion that made him protest so loudly against those who took as their models for Mary's statue and Mary's pictures lewd and dissolute women. "Conceive what must have been the beauty of the Blessed Virgin," he says, "who possessed such sanctity, sanctity that shone from all her features." "Beautiful Virgin! Virgin Mother of God! Virgin full of mercy!" was his favourite aspiration. He wrote a devout treatise on the *Ave Maria*—which was Heaven's message to earth, Gabriel's prayer, and the Church's prayer to the Mother of God—in which he says: "Pray for us, O Mother of God, to whom thy Son can refuse nothing. O thou well-beloved spouse, to whom thy Spouse will grant everything. Thou, O gracious Queen, thou art our Mother and the Mother of Mercy, therefore shouldst thou have pity on us!" "Doubt not," he tells his readers, "but that if you pray in this manner, you will be heard." Again: "She is blessed by God who has laden her with gifts and graces greater than He has given to others except to the Humanity of her Divine Son, Jesus Christ, . . . but after that (the Sacred Humanity of our Lord), we justly hold that she has received more graces than every human or angelic creature." "Is she not the spouse of Him who is the King of the universe, that is God the all-powerful, for Jesus Christ is the true Son of God? Is she not the Mother of the King of earth and Heaven, of Jesus Christ, who is consubstantial with the Father? Is she

not the tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, who with Father and Son is blessed for evermore? The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost will, that she who is Spouse, Mother, and tabernacle, should be held in great honour by all creatures." In his sermon for the Third Sunday of Lent, he cried out from his great earnest soul: "O Mary! O saints of God! angels and archangels, plead with the Lord that He hear us without fail!"

If this is "denouncing" devotion to Mary and the saints, language must have had a different meaning in the fifteenth century, from the meaning which it has to-day. Upon this point we may add the hymn, so full of Catholic faith and love, which he composed, and which was sung during the great plague in Florence. For the translation we are indebted to R. R. Madden.<sup>1</sup>

O Star of Galilee,  
Shining o'er this earth's dark sea,  
Shed thy glorious light on me.  
Maria Stella Maris.

Queen of Clemency and Love,  
Be my Advocate above,  
And, through Christ, all sin remove.  
Maria Stella Maris.

When the Angel called thee blest,  
And with transports filled thy breast,  
'Twas thy Lord became thy guest.  
Maria Stella Maris.

Earth's purest creature thou,  
In the heavens exulting now,  
With a halo round thy brow.  
Maria Stella Maris.

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, vol. i. p. 380.

Beauty beams in every trace  
Of the Virgin Mother's face,  
Full of glory and of grace—

Maria Stella Maris.

A Beacon to the just,  
To the sinner Hope and Trust,  
Joy of the angel host.

Maria Stella Maris.

Ever glorified, thy throne  
Is where thy Blessed Son  
Doth reign : through Him alone,

Maria Stella Maris.

All pestilence shall cease,  
And sin and strife decrease,  
And the kingdom come of peace.

Maria Stella Maris.

*Rites and Ceremonies.*—Now as to rites and ceremonies. Let us once more quote the words of the Dean : "He would have none of the Church's superb ritual, its gorgeous, glittering, sensuous, and perfumed services." He would have none of it ! Why, he lived and moved in the Church's ritual ! What was the *daily Mass* which he said ? It was the Mass which is said even now in a Dominican Church every day, from first to last one of the most ceremonious of the Church's services. Villari speaks often of his "performing," that is, as we should say, "singing High Mass." "On the last day of the Carnival . . . all were prepared for a religious solemnity. In the morning, men, women, and children, attended a *Great (High) Mass*, celebrated by Savonarola, and all received Communion from his hands."<sup>1</sup> Every one knows that of all the devotions of the Catholic Church, none has such "superb ritual," none is so

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 133.

“gorgeous,” “glittering,” and “perfumed,” as a High Mass. It is almost as “gorgeous,” and “glittering,” and “perfumed,” as the worship described in the fourth, fifth, and eight chapters of the Apocalypse, with the “rainbow around the throne,” and the “twenty ancients clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads,” and “the seven lamps burning before the throne,” and “before the throne the sea of glass like crystal,” and the “living creatures saying, Holy, Holy, Holy,” and “the four-and-twenty ancients falling down before Him that sitteth on the throne,” and “the golden vials full of odours,” and “the harps,” and “the priests,” and the “golden censer with much incense,” and “the smoke of the incense,” and “the golden altar.” And yet Savonarola was the celebrant of, that is, he took the principal part, and was the chief and moving figure in this High Mass.

What, again, was *The Church's Office* in which he daily took part as a Dominican friar who had deliberately joined an Order which is a choral Order and is traditionally the Order most devoted to the ritual of the Church? The Divine Office is the same that is said several times a day in Dominican Churches now—with its standing, and its kneeling, and its bowing, and its ever-varying postures, with its incense, and its candles, and its plaintive chant, and its daily procession introduced by St. Dominic himself and prescribed as part of the sacred routine of daily prayer in a Chapter held in Paris as early as 1226. What was the Ceremonial followed at San Marco's in Florence during the priorship of Savonarola four hundred years ago? What but the Dominican Ceremonial which Dominicans follow in England

to-day, for it was drawn up in 1245 by four friars from France, England, Lombardy, and Germany!

Let the Dean turn again to the "powerful novel" from which he has studied Savonarola's life and taken his inspiration, and what will he find? Ceremonies everywhere! In the chapter on "The Unseen Madonna," a ceremonial procession, headed by a cross and "a white image of the youthful Jesus," and "a long train of the Florentine youth," and Benedictines, and Franciscans, and Servites, and Carmelites, and Dominicans, and officers of State, and "Canons of the Duomo carrying a sacred relic," and the Archbishop in gorgeous cope with canopy held over him, and in the midst of all, as part of the procession—Savonarola! At the trial by fire once more, Fra Domenico, his bosom friend, true to him in life and faithful to him unto death, is "arrayed in a velvet cope," and heads the procession, cross in hand Savonarola follows, "in the white vestments of a priest, carrying in his hands the sacred vessels containing the Sacred Host, which he deposits on the altar, all the while chanting slowly." This description of the novelist, we may say, with the exception of a few details, is not romance, but history; it is fact, not fiction: the Dean will find it in Villari. Which does the scene remind us of—the service in the Church of the Reformers, or the service of our Catholic Church? The cold, dry, soul-chilling worship of the Established Church, or the inspiring, generous devotional worship of the Church to which Savonarola and we belong?

So much for Savonarola's actions with reference to the ceremonies and ritual of the Church. Now a word as to his teaching. The eighteenth chapter of



the third book of *The Triumph of the Cross* is a defence of ceremonies and ritual, special reference, with explanations, being made to the Catholic practices of bowing to images of our Lord and the saints, using holy water blessed by a priest, and wearing vestments. During the Advent of 1491, Savonarola was preaching a course of sermons on the First Epistle of St. John. This course he interrupted, in order to gratify the wishes of many of his listeners to have from him an explanation of the ceremonies of the Mass, and to learn how to hear Mass with profit to their souls. This man, of whom it has been said that "he would have none of the Church's ritual," devotes four sermons to the elucidation of the meaning of the ceremonies of the Mass. He explains the signification of the *vestments*, such as are worn in our churches to-day, *the amice, the alb, the girdle, the maniple, the stole, and the chasuble*. He then describes to them the ceremonies of the sacred rite of all others to the Catholic most sacred. He tells them what thoughts to dwell upon during the various portions of the Mass; at *the Confiteor, the Kyrie eleison*, thrice repeated, *the Epistle, the Gospel, the Credo, the Sanctus, the Communion*. He even goes into minute details, such as the crosses made by the priest on forehead, lips, and heart when he says the Gospel, the washing of the fingers at the *Lavabo*, the saying of the *Ite Missa est*, and the blessing given at the end.

And yet we are asked to believe that "he would have none of the Church's ritual!"

*The Papacy.*—And now we come to our last and crucial point, "obedience to the See of Rome," which

we Catholics look upon as the centre of unity, the heart of the Catholic Church, the ruling power in Christendom. Against this the Reformers protested, and so are called Protestants. To this See, Savonarola professed devotion, loyalty, and obedience even to the end. His words are a clear profession of his belief. Even Villari says of them: "Pope Alexander could not have exacted a more explicit profession of faith or a more absolute submission to Papal authority."<sup>1</sup> This is his profession of faith to the Papacy. The words occur in the fourth book of *The Triumph of the Cross*,<sup>2</sup> to which we have so often referred. After stating that he is now going to "argue against heretics who, though they admit Christ's Gospel, yet have they fallen into different errors about it," and that "it being impossible to discuss every dogma which he dispute," he proposes with one blow (*uno ictu*) "to strike at all their errors," he goes on:

First, therefore, we will prove that it is necessary for the entire Church (*universam ecclesiam*) to be governed by one head. If heretics admit that the Church is guarded by Divine Providence, they must also acknowledge that it has the best and wisest government. The best government for a multitude is that one should rule all so that peace and unity may prevail. . . . In the Church triumphant in Heaven God is the sole Ruler, so in the Church militant should there be one head. . . . So in Osee i. 11, we read: "And the children of Juda and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves *one head*;" and in the Gospel of St. John:<sup>3</sup> "There shall be one fold and one Shepherd." Now we cannot say that our Lord was Head of the Church in such a way that after His Ascension into Heaven it was to have no visible Head

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. 241.<sup>2</sup> C. vi.<sup>3</sup> St. John x.

whatever, for in this case the Church would be left a prey to divisions and all sorts of confusion and disorder. Opposite opinions, disputes, difficulties, and doubts can only be settled by a judge who is well known to all. Therefore, our Lord said to Peter, "Feed My sheep," and again, "I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith may never fail, and do thou in thy turn confirm thy brethren." Here we see clearly that our Lord made St. Peter His Vicar on earth, and we see it still more clearly in those other words, "Thou art Peter (the rock), and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall never prevail against it, and to thee will I give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be likewise bound in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." Now surely we cannot say that this supreme authority was only given to St. Peter and not to his *successors*, for our Lord said that His Church was to last to the end of time: "Behold I am with you all days, to the end of the world." And this is what Isaiah meant when, speaking of the Son of God, he said: "He shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to strengthen it and confirm it for ever in judgment and justice." Now, since the Bishops of Rome are the successors of St. Peter, it follows that the Church of Rome is the mistress and head of all Churches, and all true Christians must be united to the Roman Pontiff, like members to their head; and, moreover, all those who separate from the unity and teaching of the Roman Church, separate themselves from Jesus Christ.

Surely, as Villari puts it forcibly, "it was no longer possible to believe that one who had so explicitly acknowledged the authority of the Papal Keys had the slightest intention of raising a schism in the Church." Surely no one can for an instant maintain that he was not in his teaching loyal to the Holy See. If at any time he was wanting in obedience, if under any circumstance he failed to carry out the will of the Holy Father, no one can accuse him of

heresy upon this which we have called the "crucial point" of Catholic belief. Words could not express more emphatically faith in the primacy and supremacy of the Pope as a cardinal article of Catholic creed than the words which we have just cited. How different from the words of Luther, of Calvin, of the English Church. Never did he say, never did he imply that any one belonging to the Church of God could withdraw himself from obedience to the Holy See. "The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England,"<sup>1</sup> would have inspired him with such a sermon from the pulpit of the Duomo, that no one would have ventured to have substituted "Florence" or "Italy" for "England." "It is not true," he said vehemently from that very pulpit when some one even hinted that he was not obedient to the Pope, "it is not true. . . . I submit everything that I may say to the judgment of the Church of Rome."<sup>2</sup>

*Objections raised against his loyalty to the Pope.*—We cannot, in the little space allotted to us in a *brochure*, enter into the large subject, upon which many volumes have been written, of the supposed, or real, collision of Savonarola with Alexander VI. Any one who wishes to see the question more fully discussed will find it treated of (as we have already said) in the *Étude sur Savonarole*, by the Dominican, Père Ceslas Bayonne, who has also translated into French many of our great Dominican's works. We can only touch upon it briefly. Let us say at the outset that the argument, laid down by some Catholic as well as many Protestant authors, that Savonarola

<sup>1</sup> Article xxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> *Sermon on Exodus*, 1498.

was excusable if he was not in all things subject to Alexander VI. on account of the private life of the Pope, which was unworthy of his high calling, is an argument which we entirely repudiate. No matter what his private life may have been, no depravity can justify disobedience, however exasperating to a man of austere virtue the depravity may be. The obedience of Catholics to the Pope rests, not on his personal holiness, but on his authoritative power. We obey him, not as a man, but as the Vicar and representative of God. Whatever Pope Alexander may have been as a man, he was Pope, and as Pope had authority to command. Moreover, as Pope he was acknowledged by the Church, and as Pope he had a right to the obedience of the faithful. His private character we leave to God, his public authority is a matter beyond dispute. We admit then frankly that if Savonarola disobeyed, in that he sinned; all that we maintain is that, if he sinned, his was neither the sin of *heresy* nor yet of *schism*.

But did he disobey? He was a son—we have seen it in his words—was he a rebellious one? Three accusations are brought against him: (1) That he refused to go to Rome when summoned by the Pope, a summons which every priest is bound, *if possible*, to obey. (2) That he continued to preach when forbidden to do so by the Holy See, or, at least, that though for a time he ceased to preach, he took up his sermons again. (3) That he wrote to the Kings of England and France, and to the Emperor of Germany and the Queen of Spain, upon the importance of summoning a General Council to depose the reigning Pontiff.

I. *As to the first count: his refusal to go to Rome.*  
—Here is the Pope's letter inviting him as a Father, and commanding him as a Superior to visit him, and laying down the objects of that visit. The letter and those which follow are beyond dispute—they are admitted by all to be authentic.

Beloved son,—Health and Apostolic benediction.

Amongst the many who have toiled in the vineyard of the Lord of Sabbaoth, We have heard from several sources that your labours have been particularly earnest and successful. This fills us with deep joy and gratitude to God, who so powerfully works amongst us by His grace. Nor do We doubt but that you are an instrument in His hands for the abundant sowing of His Divine Word, and the reaping of a plentiful harvest. Moreover, recent letters on this very subject have given Us to understand that in all your sermons you instruct the people in the service of God, and that you announce future events, being moved thereto not by human wisdom or learning, but by the Spirit of God. Being desirous therefore, as in duty bound, of conferring with you on these matters, and so learning God's will more clearly, We desire you to come to Us as soon as possible, and send you a command in virtue of holy obedience to that effect. We shall greet you with fatherly tenderness and love.

Given at Rome at St. Peter's, July 21, 1495.

Now, how did Savonarola receive this letter? We know the action of the so-called "Reformers" under similar circumstances. Luther publicly burned the Papal Decretals in the square at Wittenberg, and said that he would wish to do the same with the Pope and the Papal See.<sup>1</sup> The English Church hurled back at the Pontiff the thirty-seventh Article: "The Bishop of Rome has no jurisdiction in this realm of England." How different the action of Savonarola, whom the

<sup>1</sup> *Exust. Antichrist. Decret. Opp. Lutheri.* ii. p. 320. Edit. Jenæ.



Dean of Canterbury would have to be the "harbinger of the Reformation." He receives it as a dutiful son. He admits the authority of the Father. He kneels at his feet in spirit—as a child—and he protests that it is only *impossibility* which prevents him from going where his heart draws him, viz., to the feet of the Vicar of Christ. It is unfair to say that he *refused* to go to Rome. It was not that he would not; no, he could not go to Rome. He wrote to the Pope and gave his reasons, at the same time professing his obedience to the Holy See, his willingness to kneel at the Holy Father's feet, and his intention of so doing when in his power. Listen to his letter to Pope Alexander, and remember the while that they were not days when men travelled impelled by steam. A journey for him meant a journey on foot, and a journey from Florence to Rome and back was not then as now, a matter of hours, but of days and perhaps weeks, to say nothing of dangers on the way.

Most Holy Father [he wrote], I prostrate myself at the feet of your Holiness. Although I am aware that we must always obey the commands of our superiors, since we read in Holy Writ: "He that heareth you, heareth Me," still it is their meaning and not merely their words that we have to obey. And since I have long desired to visit Rome and worship at the threshold of the Apostles, and venerate the relics of so many saints, and see your Holiness, these my earnest longings have greatly increased since the day I received your Holiness's letter deigning to invite one so unworthy to your presence. But as there are many difficulties in the way, I will humbly set them before your Holiness, that you may see that my excuses are reasonable, and that it is necessity and not unwillingness which prevents me obeying the command I received with the deepest love and reverence. In the first place, there is my weak state



of health, resulting from the attacks of fever and other illnesses I have had of late. Then my position here, especially during the past year, has entailed on me such a continual strain of mind and body that I am reduced to the greatest weakness and utterly unable to undertake any work or undergo the least fatigue. The doctors have even obliged me to give up all preaching and study of any kind. For in their opinion, and in that of many other friends, I shall be endangering my life unless I at once submit to proper treatment. But since Almighty God has made use of me to deliver this city from bloodshed and various other serious evils, and to establish peace and respect for the laws, I have made as many enemies as there are wicked men in this place, for whether they were citizens or strangers, they vented their rage on me when they saw their love of fighting, their ambition, and their greedy thoughts of rapine and plunder frustrated. At the present moment their plots against my life, either by open assassination or more secret poisoning, are so frequent, that I cannot leave the house without guards. Indeed, when I went to confer with the French King, the loyal Florentines would not allow me to pass out of their protection, although I was furnished with a safe conduct. And although I trust in God, yet I may not despise ordinary precautions, lest I may seem to be tempting Him, since it is written, "When they persecute you in one city, flee into another." Moreover, the recent improvement in this city, which God's grace has effected, is hardly sufficiently established to withstand the persistent efforts of the wicked, and needs daily care and attention. Since, therefore, my departure at the present moment would, in the opinion of earnest and prudent men, cause difficulties amongst the people and help on the plots of the Medicean faction, it is evidently not God's will that I should leave here at present. I hope it will be soon. And if, perhaps, your Holiness wishes to know more about the misfortunes of Italy and the renovation of the Church, of which I have publicly spoken, it is all fully treated of in a book which I am now having printed, and which, as soon as it is ready, I will send to your Holiness, and from it you will be able to gather all that you wish to hear.

I have said nothing but what is there. I have only delivered the message entrusted to me; to go beyond that and attempt to read the unknown secrets of God would be sinful. I have had all these things printed that all may know if I have been deceived and deceiving. But if things happen as I have said, then let them thank our Lord and Saviour, who, by His loving care of us, shows that He wishes no one to perish eternally. And so I ask your Holiness to accept these my excuses as most true and valid, and to believe that nothing could give me greater joy than to be able to carry out your commands. I need no other spur than my own desires to urge me to conquer these difficulties as soon as I can and satisfy the wishes of your Holiness, to whom I commend myself in all humility.

From the Convent of St. Mark's, Florence, the last day of July, 1495.

2. *As to the second objection: his preaching after the Pope's inhibition.*—Contemporary historians tell us that the Pope's Legate returned to Rome from Sienna without delivering the Papal Bull to Savonarola in Florence, merely sending it by another; that Savonarola maintained, not that the Pope had not power to prohibit his preaching, but that His Holiness had done so under a misapprehension, that he had been misled by his enemies and misguided by those against whom he had preached, and that had the Pope known the real truth he would not have issued the decree, and that therefore it was void. This being so, Savonarola maintained—rightly or wrongly we need not inquire now—that the inhibition did not bind. Again, we must remember that those were not days of electric telegraphs or even quick posts, and so, explanations being difficult, misunderstandings were frequent. The magistrates of Florence and the Fathers of St. Mark's wrote to the Pope,

telling him he had been misinformed.<sup>1</sup> Savonarola wrote again, and whilst professing his loyalty to the Holy See and his obedience to the Vicar of Christ, gave his reasons why he thought the Pope's order not binding.

Most Holy Father [he writes], I prostrate myself at the feet of your Holiness. Why is my Lord angry with his servant, or where is the wrong that I have done? If the sons of iniquity have spoken falsely of me, why does my Lord not inquire of his servant and hear his account before believing them? For it is not easy to persuade a mind which is already prejudiced. Many dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me, and they say: "Behold! his God cannot help him or save him." *For your Holiness holds the place of God on earth*, and they accuse me of treason towards you, saying that I do not cease to blame you and find fault with you, and so in many ways they twist and cruelly pervert the meaning of my words. The same thing was done two years ago, but thousands who heard me can witness to my innocence, as well as my own words faithfully taken down at the time and printed and scattered abroad. Let these be brought forward and read and examined, that it may be seen if in them there is anything offensive to your Holiness, as these liars so often assert. Is it likely that I would say one thing and write another, and so lay myself open to the charge of flagrant contradiction? What could be the object or the intention of such a line of conduct? I only wonder that your Holiness does not see their wicked madness. As for this great and renowned preacher, he must have little shame or honesty to accuse an innocent man of the very crime of which he is guilty. His words cannot be hidden away—there are numerous witnesses who have heard him openly attacking your Holiness, and lest I should be accused of falsehood, I could, if necessary, bring forward legal proof. But I have not forgotten that his insolence has already been silenced and condemned, since it is sinful to calumniate

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix No. 3.

any one, no matter how lowly he may be, much more *one who is the Ruler and Pastor of all*. Who so senseless as to be ignorant of this? For, thanks be to God, I am not yet so utterly abandoned, so utterly forgetful of my duty, as, without any reason or excuse, to dare to attack and insult the Vicar of Christ, to whom above every one else on earth reverence is due. As for the rest, I have never uttered a word contrary to the Holy Catholic Faith, or contrary to the teaching of the Roman Church, to whose judgment and authority I have ever submitted myself, and ever shall whenever I am called upon. And this is what I have always taught and shall teach with all my strength, at the same time doing my best to rouse men to sorrow for sin and amendment of life by wakening their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The work which I shall shortly bring out, on *The Triumph of the Cross*, is a witness to my faith, and from it can be seen if I have ever taught heresy or in any way opposed the Catholic faith.

Will your Holiness therefore turn a deaf ear to these envious and lying tongues and only believe what has been examined and proved, since many of their falsehoods have already been openly detected. But if all human help fail me, and the wickedness of these impious men gain the day, I will still hope in God and in His help, and make their wickedness so public to the whole world that perhaps at the very last they will repent of their evil designs.

I most humbly commend myself to your Holiness.

From the Convent of St. Mark, Florence, May 22, 1497.

3. *The third count against his loyalty to the Pope was his appeal for a General Council.*—In this he erred, through excess of zeal. The letters were undoubtedly written—and written they ought not to have been. The provocation was great, but, like any other temptation to wrong-doing, it should have been resisted with patience and prayer and trust in God, who alone can calm the storm and bid the

waves "be still" till Peter's bark has reached the shore. The days were dark, very dark; the times troubled, very troubled; wickedness prevailed even in holy places; his earnest soul was stirred at the sight of wrong-doing, and zeal triumphed over prudence. He was wrong! Many thought at the time, and Savonarola amongst them, that the election of Alexander VI. to the Pontificate was invalid because simoniacal. History has proved this false, since the Church has acknowledged him as a true Pope, though not worthy of his high calling. Savonarola was wrong in writing the letters, although the letters were never sent, as documents recently found go to show. Still he was wrong, but it was an error of the mind and not of the heart; it was an error of fact, and not of principle or doctrine.

Nay, if, for argument's sake, we admit that in all three points he erred, what does it prove? That he was disobedient, but not heretical; that he acknowledged not in fact what was really the belief of his mind and the conviction of his soul. If through being misled, or through excess of zeal, he disobeyed—what then? It was disobedience, not heresy or schism. It was a blot on an otherwise stainless life, a stain on an otherwise unsullied name. The penalty of that blot he has paid with his life, the stain has been cleansed with his blood, his name remains fair. But to call Savonarola a "leader of the Reformers," a "harbinger of the Reformation"—his life, his words, his acts, all laugh the idea to scorn!

*Savonarola was a loyal Catholic.*—Never was a man more Catholic or more in touch with the Catholic Church than he. Several of her saints

regarded him as a saint. St. Philip Neri, "the Apostle of Rome," who was born in Florence and then lived in Rome, and therefore knew Rome and knew Savonarola, always had a picture of "the Apostle of Florence" in his room, with an aureola of glory around his head. St. Catharine of Ricci, too, had his portrait, and under it the inscription, "True likeness of F. Jerome, a prophet sent from God," and she preserved one of his fingers as a relic, calling it "the finger of Blessed Jerome." She even ascribed a miracle to his prayers.<sup>1</sup>

Catholic artists have perpetuated his memory as sacred. The great Raphael, at the instance of Pope Julius II., painted a picture of the Blessed Sacrament, at the Vatican, and represented Savonarola by St. Thomas's side. Fra Bartolommeo's picture of him in the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence represents him as a martyr. Medals were struck of him in Rome, on which his name was engraved, with the prefix of "Blessed." Offices were composed in his honour, and hymns written in his name. His religious brethren held his memory in veneration. A few years after his death, Cardinal Alessandro dei Medici wrote: "They (the Dominicans of San Marco) celebrate his feast as that of a martyr; they preserve his relics as if he were a saint, even the beam of the gallows from which he was hanged, the iron hooks which bore his weight, his habit, his hoods, the bones left unconsumed by the fire, his ashes, his hair-shirt; they treasure the wine which was blessed by him and give it to the sick, and talk of miracles."

<sup>1</sup> Benedict XIV., *De Servorum Dei Beatificatione*, lib. iii. c. xxv.

His writings, which were never condemned even by Alexander VI., although published in his reign, were critically examined under Paul III., Julius III., and Paul IV., and were declared free from all error. Popes have spoken of him in glowing terms; one (Paul III.) saying that he would consider him as suspected of heresy who would accuse Savonarola of heresy. Benedict XIV. thought him worthy of canonization, and said that "as a proof of his holiness it was enough that St. Philip Neri proclaimed it 'a victory' that his writings were approved, and that he always had the aureoled image of Savonarola in his room." His name appears on the *Catalogue of Saints and Blessed Servants of God and other Venerable persons illustrious by their sanctity*, published in Rome in the year 1751, during the Pontificate of this same Benedict XIV. Archbishop Capecelatro, in his *Life of St. Philip Neri*, recently translated by the Rev. Father Pope of the Birmingham Oratory, has a most interesting chapter on "St. Philip and Savonarola," in which he tells us amongst other things that Clement VIII. "held him (Savonarola) in singular veneration, had serious thoughts of canonizing him, and allowed his portraits to be seen in Rome, with rays about his head, and with the titles of 'Blessed' and 'Doctor' and 'Martyr.'"



### Conclusion.

To sum up all in a word. Savonarola's life, teaching, and creed were the very antithesis of the life, teaching, and creed of the "Reformers" of the sixteenth age. They left the cloister for the world; he left the world for the cloister, and was ever true to his vows. They began by self-deformation, on their own admission; he by self-reformation, on the evidence of friend and foe. They dragged down public morality, on their own showing; he raised it to the highest perfection. They aimed at reforming creed and doctrine; he reformed morals and men, upholding always doctrine and creed. They denied what he taught: the necessity of good works, the need of the sacraments as channels of grace, Transubstantiation, rites and ceremonies, loyalty to Peter's See, and devotion to the Mother of God. How, then, can he be their "leader," their "harbinger"—he who condemns and anathematizes them all!

\* \* \* \* \*

*Magna est veritas et prevalebit*—"Truth is great and will prevail." In the words of Dean Farrar: "Savonarola perished, but the truth of which he had been the mighty preacher lived and bore fruit unto eternal life." Yes, it lived, and lives, but where? Savonarola tells us with his last breath. It was the day of his cruel, heartless death. He had assisted at Mass. He had received "the Body of the Lord." He had bowed his head for the Plenary Indulgence sent by the Pope. He had said, "I retract any errors

which I may have taught." His lips open for the last time—those lips that had so often spoken fearless words of intrepid zeal—and what were his last words? They were the words which are said to have been his first ; words which summed up his life, words which vindicated his venerated name: *Credo in Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicam*—"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." In that Church he lived, in that Church he died, in that Church his will ever be *clarum et venerabile nomen*—"an illustrious and venerable name."

# APPENDIX No. I.

## List of Savonarola's Works.

- The Triumph of the Cross. 4 books.
- On the Simplicity of Christian Life. 5 books.
- On Jewish Astrology. 3 books.
- Explanation of the Our Father and Hail Mary.
- Treatise on Humility.
- „ Love of Jesus Christ.
- „ Widowhood.
- The Lament of the Spouse of Christ.
- The Soul and the Spirit. 7 Dialogues.
- Reason and Sense. 3 Dialogues.
- Prayer. 2 books.
- Rules of Prayer and Devout Life.
- Explanation of the Commandments.
- The Sacrifice of the Mass and its Mysteries.
- Frequent Communion.
- The Sign of the Cross. Advantages and Meaning.
- Union with God. A Discourse.
- Letter on taking the Habit of Religion.
- On the Perfection of the Religious State.
- Letters to the Brethren of the Order of St. Dominic.
- Spiritual Reading. For Sisters of Third Order.
- Perfection of Spiritual Life.
- The Seven Rules of a Religious.
- Meditations on the Psalm, *Diligam te, Domine.*
- „ Various Psalms.
- The Mystery of the Cross.
- Manual of Confessors.
- Sermons for Sundays and Festivals.
- Forty-Eight Sermons for Lent.
- Homilies on Holy Writ, &c.

## APPENDIX No. 2.

## Pope Alexander VI. and Savonarola.

It is the common opinion among the apologists of Savonarola that Alexander VI. was deceived by the calumnious mis-statements of his enemies, that at times even during his life the Pope had serious misgivings as to the truth of the accusations against him, and that after his death he conceived a sincere veneration for his memory.

In the year 1496, so we are told by Burlamacchi, Villari, and others, the Pope, through the Procurator-General of the Dominican Order, P. Ludivico de Farrara, offered him a Cardinal's hat, "on account of his virtues and his wisdom." On the following day, August 20, he gave his answer from the pulpit of the Duomo. "No, no," he cried out, "I do not wish for human glory—far be it from me! It is enough for me, O Lord, that Thou hast shed Thy Blood for me. I wish not to glorify myself, but Thee. *Thou art my glory, Thou dost lift up my head*, and all my being. I wish for neither hats nor mitres, great or small; I wish only for Thy gift to Thy saints, death. A hat, a red hat, but red with blood—this is what I desire." When this bold answer was reported to the Pope, Alexander expressed admiration for his rare firmness of character, and exclaimed: "That man must be a great servant of God. Let no one speak to me again either in his favour or against him."

In the May of the following year, the adversaries of Savonarola having reported ill of him again to His Holiness, the Florentine Ambassador presented a protest to him in the name of the Republic, and Savonarola wrote the letter which we have already quoted. The representations of the Ambassador and the letter of Savonarola made a great impression on the Pope, and the Cardinal Archbishop of

Naples assured the Florentine Ambassador that the Holy Father regretted having sent the Brief, especially as he had sent it by John di Camerino, whom he now knew to be an enemy both of Florence and of Savonarola. Hearing that the Legate had not gone to Florence, but had remained at Sienna, he said: "If he is wise, he will not go there." It is probable that, had not the Papal Brief been then published in Florence, it would have been withdrawn, as was a former Bull which was sent in the October of 1496.<sup>1</sup>

After the death of Savonarola, when his enemies were silenced, things which had been kept from him were brought to the notice of the Pope, and he learned to appreciate his spirit, his virtues, and his zeal. When apologists defended the memory of the great Dominican, he listened to all and censured none. In 1501 he published a decree against authors suspected of heresy, but Savonarola's name does not appear amongst them. The writings of Savonarola were shortly after printed in Venice, with the approval of the Patriarch and the Inquisitor of the Faith. P. Neri tells us, too, in his *Apologia pro Fra G. Savonarola*, that when the newly elected General of the Dominicans, P. Vincent Bandelli, spoke to Alexander VI. of the great virtue of the illustrious friar, the Pope sighed, and said that he had been misinformed.<sup>2</sup> P. Molineri relates also that, when a Dominican had the boldness to reproach Alexander with having cast dishonour on Savonarola's name, the Pope replied: "By no means; it was my Legate who was cruel."

Burlamacchi, in fine, informs his readers that, "as time went on, the Pope regretted more and more the step that he had taken, and that he declared on one occasion, in a full Consistory, that *he would willingly inscribe the name of Savonarola on the Catalogue of Saints.*"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bayonne, *Étude*, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Edit. Florence, 1546, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> *Vita Savonarolæ*, p. 195. Edit. de Lucca, 1764.

## APPENDIX No. 3.

(Lupi, *Nuovi Documenti*, p. 112; ap. Bayonne, p. 151.)**Letter of the Magistrates of Florence to  
Alexander VI.**

Most Holy Father,—Whilst Father Jerome Savonarola was instructing the faithful in religion and morality in our Cathedral Church, your Apostolic Letter was given to him, in which you speak of him as a *son of iniquity*. He at once withdrew into his monastery, resolved to give way for a time to the violence of the storm, and feeling convinced that the anger of Your Holiness would be appeased when you knew the deep malice of his calumniators. They have dared to accuse him of sowing pernicious errors amongst the people, and of being to them the cause of sin and scandal. But in witness of the truth we declare that, on the contrary, he has been a most excellent minister of the word; and that up to the present time he has worked in the vineyard of the Lord with such great success that no other preacher whom we have known has ever gathered such precious fruits from his preaching. As to the saying of the Prophet: "Make known to us the things which are to come, and we shall know that ye are God's," we must admit that we are bound to acknowledge something more than human in a man who for eight years has foretold to us many things which have afterwards come to pass. But his principal work has been to bring about our reformation, and to lead us to piety and virtue by his instructions, his writings, and his constant preaching.

The zeal of God's house which devours him has won for him the enmity of many who love darkness rather than light; and thus false reports have made Your Holiness regard as a dangerous man one who has made use of his ministry and his talents only to preach justice, to make

every one true to duty, to keep our Republic from dangers, to oppose tyranny, to instruct parents to bring their children up as Christians, to lead women to modesty and simplicity, to accustom young people to read the life of Jesus Christ and the lives of His Saints, in a word, to protect society against the evil example of those who are unworthy of the name of Christians.

See then, Most Holy Father, what are the actions, what the intentions, of Savonarola; see what his accusers call "pulling down the walls of Jerusalem." What is the object of their false charges? What but to blacken and destroy a just man, to deprive us of a faithful guide, and to bring about new troubles amongst our citizens; for this is the only means left to them of harming us and of carrying out their ambitious ends.

We grieve to find ourselves in such circumstances that we cannot carry out the orders of Your Holiness without doing great harm to our country, and showing great ingratitude to a man who has rendered us singular services. Let us add that it would be difficult to do anything against him without causing universal grief and exposing many to danger, for the well-known virtue and the reputation of Savonarola have won for him the hearts of the faithful and the esteem of the people. Your Holiness, always being opposed to the disturbance of order, would certainly not wish us to obey in a danger so certain, and to our own dishonour. . . .

Given in the Palace, the 4th of May, 1497.

### **Extract from the Letter of the Fathers of San Marco to Pope Alexander VI.**

"We are nearly all Florentines; we live and hold converse with him (Savonarola); and as we have left the world in order to serve God, Your Holiness will understand



that we would not defend one who is a stranger were we not convinced of the excellence of his life, were we not certain that the hand of God is with him, and that upon his presence here and his preaching depend both the safety of our city and the advancement of the Christian religion. The proof of this we have in the great number of honourable, prudent, and learned men whom he has converted, and who live under his fostering care that they may grow in faith and virtue. And in order to strengthen our evidence, and to remove all shadow of suspicion, we have asked a number of noble and virtuous citizens to sign this our address. Should Your Holiness wish it, we can produce signatures not only by hundreds, but by thousands. Your Holiness will thus see that you have been misinformed in this matter by people who have no fear of God. We beg of you, therefore, to deign to revoke the censures which have been fulminated against Father Jerome, and to give him your sanction to carry out the holy work which he has taken in hand. . . ."

# Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln.

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BY MGR. W. CROKE ROBINSON.

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ROBERT Grosseteste, the famous Bishop of Lincoln (A.D. 1235—1253), is claimed by all sorts and conditions of Protestants as the great medieval champion of British ecclesiastical rights against the so-called encroachments of Rome. He is commonly quoted as evidence of the fact that Papal jurisdiction never sat comfortably upon the English nation. His example is of peculiar value for this purpose (so it is maintained), because being for a great part of his life an ardent supporter of the claims of the See of Rome, at the last he was forced, in spite of himself, to give up his allegiance, and died in violent opposition to the Papal system. Such is the account given in ordinary Protestant histories and biographical articles<sup>1</sup> of the life of this celebrated man.

Canon Perry, of Lincoln, in his *Life and Times of Grosseteste*,<sup>2</sup> does not shrink from stating that

Robert Grosseteste was the Protestant of the thirteenth century, but he was a Protestant on the highest Church principles, and from the conviction that the Papal system

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Chambers' *Encyclopædia*, article "Grosseteste."

<sup>2</sup> Published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. This book is often quoted by Anglicans.

in its practical working was anti-Christian and destructive of souls.<sup>1</sup>

Again, on the same page, he says :

He was the most ardent supporter of Rome of his day, but he died, if not excommunicated, yet cursed and reviled by the Pope.

Again :<sup>2</sup>

His extreme hierarchical views led him, for the greater part of his career, to pay the most complete deference to the Pope as the head of the Church on earth, and to be ready, without scruple or fear, to listen to his commands rather than to those of the King or State. But, together with extreme views as to Church power, Grosseteste also held the most intensely earnest opinions as to the obligations of the clerical office and the pastoral care. For a long time he strove to reconcile these deep, practical convictions with the theory which assigned so high a place to the Pope and the Court of Rome. At length, the manifest iniquities tolerated and upheld by the Pope, produced in him a complete revulsion. From being, in his view, the representative of God, the Pope became the very minister of Satan.

Finally,<sup>3</sup> we are told that,

had his life been a few years prolonged, it may be easily believed that he would have been the leader in a general rejection by England of the preposterous claims of Rome.

Dr. Creighton, Bishop of Peterborough, in a lecture delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral on November 21, 1895, seems practically to adopt the same view, in language moderate indeed, but most misleading. If correctly reported,<sup>4</sup> he concludes that "Grosseteste, devoted to the ecclesiastical system as he was, and

<sup>1</sup> P. 6.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 292.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 295.

<sup>4</sup> *Church Times*, November 29, 1895.

an absolutely devout son of the Pope, was driven, in spite of himself, into *antagonism to that system*." Observe here the delightfully vague expression which we have italicized. If it means that Grosseteste opposed several acts of Papal administration concerning his own diocese, or even the English nation at large, we have no contention with Dr. Creighton. If, however, it is designed to convey the impression that Grosseteste died in virtual denial of Papal prerogative in general, then we do not think that Dr. Creighton is to be congratulated upon the fallacious argument from the particular to the universal.

In reply to these Anglican contentions, we shall try specially to keep two points in view: (1) what was the attitude of Grosseteste towards the Holy See in the earlier part of his life; (2) and whether it became changed to any extent in his later years.

It will be well to begin with some sketch of the authorities on which we may rely.

Of primary importance, as collecting the materials for our history, is the edition of the Epistles of Grosseteste by Henry Richards Luard, M.A., late Fellow and Assistant Tutor of Trinity College, Cambridge. The author for many years made Grosseteste his special study, and pursued his researches not only in the libraries of these countries, but also in that of the Vatican, where a large part of these epistles is preserved. It may be as well to mention that Luard, though a fair-minded man and a scholar, shows no bias in favour of the Catholic Church.

Next in importance are the editions, by the same

author, of the Annals of Winchester, Waverley, Dunstable, Bermondsey, Osney, Thomas de Wykes (probably a chronicler of Osney), and Worcester. These, with the epistles of Grosseteste, under the title of *Annales Monastici*, form part of the *Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland*, published by the authority of Her Majesty's Treasury, under the direction of the Master of the Rolls. An admirable Index, forming the fifth volume of the series, will indicate the various passages concerning Grosseteste. Belonging to the same series is the edition of *Franciscana Monumenta*, by H. S. Brewer, containing numerous references to Grosseteste.

Next may be consulted *The Life of St. Edmund of Canterbury*, by Dom Wilfrid Wallace, O.S.B., and for German scholars, Dr. Felten's *Life of Grosseteste*, a notice of which may be found in the *Dublin Review*.<sup>1</sup> Two articles in *The Month*<sup>2</sup> may be studied with great advantage.<sup>3</sup>

A very little research into the subject will discover that a large proportion of the history of Grosseteste is taken from Matthew Paris. But what is the exact worth of Paris as an historian of the inter-relationship of Rome and England? Modern criticism universally pronounces that very qualified credence must be given to many of the statements of this pugnacious monk of St. Alban's. His intense nationalism ran

<sup>1</sup> *Dublin Review*, January, 1888, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> *The Month*, August, 1880, and March, 1895.

<sup>3</sup> Students who wish to exhaust the subject will find references to original MSS. in Luard's Preface, pp. xci.—xcviii. Those who require a slighter account of the life and times of Grosseteste, may be referred to *The History of the Church in England*, vol. i., by Miss Allies, who hits off the character of the sturdy Bishop very happily.

away with much of his devotion to the Holy See, upon which he heaps abuse whenever occasion arises, with such vehemence and acrimony that it becomes manifest to every sober and impartial student of history that in great part Matthew must be drawing from his imagination. Dr. Lingard says of him :

It may seem invidious to speak harshly of this favourite historian. But this I may say, that when I could confront his pages with authentic records or contemporary writers, I have in most instances found the discrepancy between them so great as to give to his narrative the appearance of a romance rather than a history.<sup>1</sup>

Another critic writes of him thus :

Matthew Paris is a writer of many merits, and we could ill spare the fruits of his laborious industry. At the same time, among those merits no competent historian would set down a striking absence of prejudice, or a scrupulous regard for accuracy in his language about those against whom his prejudices biassed him. . . . Particularly he was prone to say things spiteful against any Bishop, Sovereign, or Pope who ventured to make the monks of St. Alban's pay money out of their treasury.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas Canon Perry and Dr. Creighton in great part rely upon Matthew Paris for their telling points against Rome, their history of Grosseteste must evidently be accepted with a very liberal number of the proverbial grains of salt.

Let us now proceed to the life of the great Bishop. He was born at Stradbroke,<sup>3</sup> in Suffolk, about the year 1175, according to the best authorities, and of

<sup>1</sup> Lingard, vol. ii. p. 237, in note.

<sup>2</sup> *The Month*, March, 1895, p. 406.

<sup>3</sup> His family name was Copley; the name of Grosseteste, or Great-head, was given him in France during his studies there. (Le Neve, *Fasti*, vol. ii. p. 10.)

humble parents. To his lowly origin we find allusion in the Lanercost Chronicle and in Matthew Paris, who states that in the subsequent quarrel of the Canons of Lincoln with Grosseteste, they expressed their regret that a man of such humble origin should have been raised by them to so high a dignity. Of his early life we know scarcely anything. He was sent to Oxford by his friends, where he studied law and medicine. All modern authors state that from Oxford he proceeded to Paris, though this is not mentioned in any contemporary history; and there, probably, he was grounded in Greek and Hebrew. It was not long before he returned to Oxford, where he graduated in Divinity, and became Master of the School, or Chancellor,<sup>1</sup> as is proved by a paper in the Registry at Lincoln of the year 1294. How long he remained at Oxford is uncertain; but with the University he identified himself in great measure during his whole life. He saw clearly the immense influence such an institution might have over the whole country, and he apparently never lost sight of this. For this reason, among others, he was led to patronize the two Orders of Friars, the Dominicans and Franciscans, who came, as will be seen later on, into England during his early career at Oxford. It is most probable that he was the means of introducing to Oxford the Franciscans, to whom he was especially devoted. By their help he hoped to carry out his reforms, expecting that their teaching and example would stimulate the other clergy to greater devotedness of life. Soon after becoming Doctor (in 1224)

<sup>1</sup> The Chancellor in those days was always resident, and Director-General of the studies of the whole University.



he became the first lecturer to the Franciscans, as well as their first Rector, and probably continued in this office till his election to the see of Lincoln. At this time he began that series of writings which evince his prodigious learning, and which it will be opportune here once for all to particularize. Besides innumerable sermons and theological treatises, he wrote a large number of works on both physical and mental philosophy, commentaries on Aristotle and Boethius, translations from the Greek, French poems, works on husbandry, &c. He possessed considerable knowledge of medicine and of music, and played with great skill on the harp. It is difficult to understand how a man of such active habits and constant occupation could have found time to master, far more to write, so much. Doubtless many books and tracts have been fathered upon him, as is constantly the case with voluminous writers of the middle ages. Yet so many undoubted works proceeded from his pen, that there can be no question of the universality of his genius and his well-merited fame as an author, in the age—be it remembered—of St. Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus.<sup>1</sup> And yet, as will be seen, his fame in our own days, at all events till quite recently, has been kept green by one single letter;<sup>2</sup> a very small proportion of his works having been published.<sup>3</sup>

To proceed with his life. He was made Archdeacon of Wilts in 1214; became Archdeacon of

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas died in 1274, and Albertus Magnus in 1280.

<sup>2</sup> No. cxxviii. The numbers by which Grosseteste's letters are referred to are those in Luard's collection.

<sup>3</sup> A list of these may be found in the Appendix to Brown's *Fasciculus Rerum Expetendarum*, written towards the close of the sixteenth century.

Northampton, and then of Leicester. He held the prebend of Clifton in Lincoln Cathedral, and was parish priest of Abbotsley, in Huntingdonshire. In 1232, however, he was seized with a violent fever, and possibly in consequence resigned all his preferments except his prebend at Lincoln. Nothing from that time is known of him till 1234, when he is ascertained to have been at his beloved Oxford. In February, 1235, Hugh de Wells, Bishop of Lincoln, died, and the Chapter at once elected Grosseteste as his successor. After some dispute as to the place of his consecration between the monks of Canterbury and the Archbishop, he was consecrated at Reading by St. Edmund on June 3rd, 1236, and enthroned about Candlemas, 1237.<sup>1</sup>

The diocese of Lincoln was at this period of enormous size, comprising the archdeaconries of Lincoln, Leicester, Stowe, Buckingham, Huntingdon, Northampton, Oxford, and Bedford. Not only might the ordinary administration of such a diocese make the episcopal heart quail, but, alas! to this must be added the rectifying of abuses which had been allowed to exist under the laxer rule of some of his predecessors. Nothing, however, appeared to daunt the "terrible Bishop." He set to work at once with characteristic vigour to purify that portion of the heavenly vineyard committed to his care.

Meanwhile let us endeavour to determine the general condition of things with which he had to deal.

As has been well remarked :

The monks had been the factors of civilization to the English people, but had worked exclusively in the country.

<sup>1</sup> Le Neve's *Fasti*, vol. ii. p. 10.

The towns still awaited their missionaries. In social status they were at a very low ebb, whilst they were not richer in material appearance or construction than the most remote Irish or Scotch village of to-day, the municipal element was highly developed. Self-government existed to an extraordinary extent with ignorance, squalor, and unsanitariness. The Mendicant Orders were made for the town just as the monks for the country; and of none is this truer than of the Franciscans.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of the Friars was the providential remedy for existing social evils, and Grosseteste, as we have already observed, was not slow to recognize it, and avail himself of their aid. Of the Franciscans, or Grey Friars, who came to England in 1219, of the Dominicans, or Black Friars, introduced into England in 1221, of the Carmelites, or White Friars, whose arrival was in 1240, Grosseteste was the devoted friend, but chiefly of the Franciscans.

Wherever he went he took some of them with him. In one of his epistles<sup>2</sup> he begs of the Minister-General of the Franciscans that, as there are no such valuable assistants as the Friars Minor, two or four of them may be always with him.

Next we have to deal with the clerical order and the abuses already alluded to. Doubtless manifold miseries and scandals existed at this period, as indeed at every period of ecclesiastical history. They were forecast by our Lord as in the first place permitted by Divine providence, and then as being certain to occur. But it may well be questioned if the picture is altogether so black as is painted, especially by

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Brewer, *Monumenta Franciscana*, Preface, p. xiv. 'Rolls Series.

<sup>2</sup> See also epp. xl. xli. lviii. lix.

those whose melancholy interest it is to defame the Spouse of Christ. Anyhow, we shall confine ourselves in this inquiry chiefly to those evils which Grosseteste himself in his various epistles has occasion to rebuke and reform. These are to be found in epistle xxii. of the year 1236, in epistle lii. of the year 1238, which includes his Constitutions, and in epistle cvii. of the year 1244 (probably). The Bishop condemns in the strongest terms the presence of the clergy at "scot-ales,"<sup>1</sup> or ale-parties, which oftentimes during these ages were held not only for convivial purposes, but to raise money for charitable objects. Again he sternly prohibits the abuse known as "the Feast of Fools,"<sup>2</sup> as did not only Grosseteste, but also most of the Popes and Bishops all along the middle ages. This "Feast of Fools" was in reality the old heathen festival of the January kalends. The first day of the new year from time immemorial and among all peoples was set apart as a day of general "license" and levity, in which, *e.g.*, the slave reclined on his master's seat at table, the master waited on his slave, and society for the moment seemed to be turned upside down. This pagan feast was gradually introduced into ecclesiastical observance, probably with the view, in the first instance, of weaning the minds of converts from these pagan

<sup>1</sup> For an account of these, see *Discipline of Drink*, p. 107, by Father Bridgett, C.SS.R. Burns and Oates.

<sup>2</sup> For the *Feast of Asses* and *Feast of Fools*, see Maitland's *Dark Ages*, pp. 146, seq., where also may be found the best available exposition of the absurdity, as well as wickedness, of accounting things like these as evidence of the depravity of the times. It need scarcely be said that Maitland was not a Catholic. His famous book was written in 1848, whilst he was Librarian to the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth. See also an excellent article in Chambers' *Encyclopædia*, vol. iv. p. 721.

ceremonies. It is easy to see what watchfulness was required to preserve such institutions from abuse.

Again, the vigils of saints' days, funerals, celebrations of patronal feasts, were at times made into the occasions of riot and debauchery, through the negligence of the pastors of the flocks. Here and there, too, were to be found priests who recited their Breviary very badly or not at all ; others, jealous of the Friars, prevented the people from confessing to them ; others exacted a sum of money in return for Holy Communion. But the most serious abuse is to be found in epistle cvii., where the Bishop writes that—

He has heard from good authority (*ex relatu fide digno audivimus*) that several priests of a certain archdeaconry are guilty of immorality (*focarias habent*), though in his visitation of the archdeaconry he himself has not been able to discover it, because probably the offenders are screened by those who ought to bring them to justice, and who would not shrink from perjury for that purpose.

Still the phrase, *ex relatu fide digno audivimus*, must fairly be taken as implying the comparative infrequency of such offences, and would scarcely be used by the Bishop, if they were so wide-spread and notorious as we are asked to believe by some authors.

In another epistle<sup>1</sup> we find Grosseteste remonstrating with the importation from abroad of certain immoral monks into the monastery at Minting. Dr. Luard remarks upon these : "The way in which they are spoken of would incline us to believe the case an exceptional one."<sup>2</sup>

In an earlier epistle<sup>3</sup> is contained a vehement exhortation to an immoral clergyman.

<sup>1</sup> Ep. cviii.    <sup>2</sup> *Grosseteste's Letters*, Preface, p. xxv. n. 2.    <sup>3</sup> Ep. x.

Finally,<sup>1</sup> we find one more possible allusion to abuses of this nature in the phrase, *illecti fædis voluptatibus*. These are the only passages, as far as we know, to be found in the epistles of Grosseteste, which refer to any licentiousness among the clergy of his day. From other sources, especially the epistles of Adam de Marisco,<sup>2</sup> the famous Franciscan theologian and precursor of the Franciscan schoolmen, who was the life-long friend and adviser of Grosseteste, we gather that, whilst on the one hand the zeal of the Reformers seems to have preserved every nauseous scrap and morsel of anecdote or ballad that could reflect on the morals of the priests and monks of this period; yet, on the other hand, undoubtedly a dark account of the times remains. As regards Giraldus Cambrensis, Welsh ecclesiastic and historian of the period, who is commonly quoted by non-Catholic authors as irrefragable evidence of the utter corruption of the age, we may "reduce his universal propositions to particulars, his plurals to singulars, yet in many respects he is not far wrong."<sup>3</sup> We do not wish to withhold a particle of truth in this unsavoury matter; but we affirm, with all who are worthy of the name of scholars, that the day has gone by for No-Popery invective against abuses which all right-minded men, whether Catholic or Protestant, deplore, but which, under the Divine permission and through human frailty, can never be altogether suppressed. The time is also happily gone by for arguing from particular abuses

<sup>1</sup> Ep. cxxx.

<sup>2</sup> See especially Brewer's *Monumenta Franciscana*, vol. i. ep. xlix. Rolls Series.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Month* (August, 1880), article by Father John Rickaby, S.J.



to universal degradation; for reading epistles and constitutions of this or that bishop directed against certain existing scandals, and then dubbing the whole body ecclesiastical as scandalous. Canon Perry's work on Grosseteste is on this account completely out of date. Let it be remembered that, if abuses did exist, the remedy was always at hand. Let it be remembered too that in this very age, when the whole head is represented by non-Catholics to be sick, and the whole heart faint, no less than three canonized Saints appear on the page of English history, St. Edmund of Canterbury (died November 16, 1242), St. Richard of Chichester (April 3, 1253), and St. Thomas of Hereford (August 25, 1382), whilst, outside our own shores, there were doing battle for Holy Church, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Louis of France, St. Ferdinand of Castile, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Is it not altogether more reasonable to affirm with the editor of the second volume of *Franciscan Monuments*,<sup>1</sup> that the many vocations to the religious life of this period,

Can be signs of nothing less than a rallying of the strength of that piety which has never in the darkest times died out from the Church to so great an extent as her enemies are eager to assert?

To proceed with our story.

In the year 1237 was held the great Council of London,<sup>2</sup> under the presidency of Cardinal Otho, in which a strenuous attempt was made to deprive

<sup>1</sup> *Monumenta Franciscana*, vol. ii. Preface, p. x. Rolls Series.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins' *Concilia*, vol. i. p. 647; see also Lyndwood's *Provinciale* in the Appendix; also Collier, vol. ii. p. 453.



pluralists of all their benefices but one, and Constitutions and Canons were promulgated which seem long to have been the principal rules for the Church in England. It was on the strength of these Conciliar regulations that Grosseteste sent his own Constitutions<sup>1</sup> through his diocese. If we are to believe Matthew Paris, it was in consequence of the severity of his efforts to carry them into effect that the Bishop's life was attempted by poison, from which he recovered with great difficulty.

It soon became manifest that no power on earth, neither Papal nor regal, neither ecclesiastical nor civil, could induce the Bishop to institute to a benefice one whom he considered incompetent. It was not, as is generally maintained, that he was opposed only to Papal provisions, nor was he actuated by a stupid national prejudice against foreigners as such; for he once desired a Franciscan friar to provide six or

<sup>1</sup> Luard, *ibid.* pp. 154, seq. Among these are several which give great scandal to Protestant historians. Thus almost all of these writers draw particular attention to the prohibition of the custom of saying Mass with vinegar. Here we have a ludicrous instance of the misleadings of prejudice. The prohibition in question merely means that in those days when good wine was scarce, and perhaps expensive, and even the best was liable to grow sour far more quickly than the wine of modern days, priests must be very careful to renew it frequently. This is why the same prohibition so frequently occurs in the canons of contemporary synods and episcopal Constitutions. We need not, then, vex our souls about the alleged enormous scandal and detriment to spiritual interests of invalid consecrations. In his *History of the Holy Eucharist*, Father Bridgett tells us (vol. i. p. 171) that although foreign wine could be always procured in England even from the times of the Roman invasion, yet until the union of the vine-growing provinces of France with the English crown, it was native wine that was in general use. Even as far north as Derbyshire the vine was grown. Yet, he adds, it is probable that the native wine was rather pure than excellent. Sour or poor wine could be mixed with honey and spices for table use. Of course no mixture of this sort was allowed in altar-wine, and care is frequently recommended in the Canons that it should not be too sour.

seven foreign clerks, by whose exemplary conduct he might benefit his diocese, even if they could not speak English. Thus, says Eccleston, he refused the nominees of the Pope and Cardinals, not because they were foreign and ignorant of English, but because they sought only temporal things.<sup>1</sup>

These energetic and probably somewhat intemperate proceedings<sup>2</sup> naturally raised a storm of opposition from the King, the barons, the clergy, and from his own Chapter. In the year 1239 began the famous quarrel between the latter and Grosseteste. Among other visitations of his diocese he included that of the Dean and Chapter. This claim was at once vehemently opposed by that body, on the ground that it had never been heard of before from the earliest times.<sup>3</sup> They produced a document stating that when the see of Lincoln was founded under William Rufus, it was settled that any delinquent member of the Chapter should in the first instance be visited and punished only by the Dean or the Chapter, the Bishop's authority being invoked, and behind the Bishop's, the King's, only in the eventuality of the delinquent member resisting the Dean or Chapter. This settlement, according to the document in question, was ratified by two Cardinal Legates who had received Apostolic authority for the purpose. Luard regards this document as a forgery, and thinks the Chapter must have known it to be such. Matthew

<sup>1</sup> *Life of St. Edmund.* By Dom W. Wallace, O.S.B., p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> Luard's *Epistles of Grosseteste*, Preface, p. xlvii.

<sup>3</sup> The complete organization of a modern or medieval Chapter—the Bishop, the *quatuor personæ*, i.e., dean, precentor, chancellor, and treasurer—the archdeacons and canons, &c., is not found till the Norman times and the twelfth century. (Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, vol. i. p. 349; but see Note A.)

Paris, however, does not make any such suggestion, nor does the document purport to be more than a memorandum of certain historical facts. It does not purport to be the authoritative charter itself. What may have been the real truth about this claim cannot nowadays be determined. According to modern ecclesiastical law the Bishop's claim would be unimpeachable. But it was such as might have been over-ridden by long-established custom or formal Papal privilege such as was invoked.<sup>1</sup>

The case excited a great deal of attention in the country, each diocese feeling that these proceedings would settle the question for itself also. It appeared at the first as if the dispute would be easily settled. Otho, the Papal Legate, imagined that he had only to appear before the contending parties, when the strife would cease. It very soon became evident that recourse must be had to the Pope. The Chapter took the initiative: appointed in secret an agent at the Papal Court, and issued a mandate to the vicars and chaplains ministering in the prebends and churches belonging to the Chapter, to refuse submission to the Bishop if he attempted to visit them. Eventually it was agreed between the disputants that application should be made to the Pope to commit the whole question to the Bishop of Worcester, Walter de Cantilupe, and the Archdeacons of Worcester and Sudbury, who were either to decide on the entire case without allowing any appeal; or, after the cause had been sufficiently investigated, by a certain day to be named by the Pope, to submit it to him to be finally settled, each

<sup>1</sup> *Chronica Majora*, iv. p. 155.

party in the meantime ceasing from exercising any visitatorial power. It was thought that by this arrangement the business was at an end, but for six long and weary years the life of the Bishop was embittered by the sad contention. At the end of that time, Pope Gregory IX. had died, as likewise his successor, Celestine IV., in the same year, 1241. Innocent IV. (1241—1254) now occupied the Papal Chair. To Innocent, whose residence was then at Lyons, whither he had been driven from Italy by the impiety and treachery of Frederic II., the German Emperor, Grosseteste with his friend, Adam de Marisco, set out at the age of seventy—at which time, by-the-bye, we have been told<sup>1</sup> by Canon Perry, that he had “ceased to look upon the Pope as the representative of God,” and had even come to regard him “as the very minister of Satan ;” and by Dr. Creighton,<sup>2</sup> that he was driven, in spite of himself, into antagonism to the Papal system.

Almost immediately upon his arrival (January 15, 1245), Boniface of Savoy was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury in succession to St. Edmund, who had died in 1240, the see having remained vacant for five years; and Roger de Weseham, Dean of Lincoln, was consecrated<sup>3</sup> Bishop of Lichfield. And here Luard<sup>4</sup> and Dr. Creighton find it difficult not to suspect unfair dealings between Grosseteste and Roger de Weseham. The triumph of the Bishop was complete as far as the right of visitation was concerned. But does it not look as if Grosseteste obtained the

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Times of Grosseteste.* By Canon Perry, p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Rege penitus inconsulto*, is the expression of the ancient chronicle.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. lxii.

episcopate for Roger on the understanding that the latter would withdraw his claim and that of his Chapter from any further contention? There does not, however, seem sufficient reason for this unfavourable suspicion of Luard. The exact circumstances whereby the Bishop gained his cause cannot be ascertained. What we do know is that the honesty and straightforwardness of Grosseteste is the prominent feature of his character, and that it is only fair to suppose that he was true to himself all through the transaction.

We must not omit to notice, in the course of these hostilities between Bishop and Chapter, a striking piece of evidence as to the intimate knowledge of Holy Scripture, in an age, be it remembered, one hundred and forty years before the production of the so-called<sup>1</sup> Wickliffe's Bible. We cannot do better than quote Luard. Of the letter<sup>2</sup> of Grosseteste to his Chapter, Luard writes :<sup>3</sup>

It is a very singular specimen of the mode of thought of the time. If the arguments seem weak and fanciful to us now, we must remember that not only are they such as appeared weighty to Grosseteste, but also such as he expected would influence his Chapter; and thus they give a curious insight into the mediæval mind, and the thorough familiarity with the Old Testament is perhaps only what we might expect; but the use of all the characters of Scripture and the forced, sometimes outrageous way, in which they are used to illustrate his argument, show how thoroughly biblical the age was.

<sup>1</sup> See article in *Dublin Review*, July, 1894, on the Pre-Reformation English Bible, by Dom Aidan Gasquet, O.S.B.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* n. cxxvii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Preface, p. xlvii.

We will now proceed as briefly as may be with our history ; and, for convenience' sake, we will consider the relations of Grosseteste first with the King and then with the Holy See ; by which time we shall be able to determine on the whole what is the true estimate to be formed of our good Bishop as a champion of the rights of Holy Church against State encroachment, and as a loyal son and servant of the Vicar of Christ.

In 1241, the prebend of Thame in Lincoln Cathedral becoming vacant, Grosseteste conferred it upon Simon de London, the penitentiary of the Bishop of Durham. The King, meanwhile, had given the presentation to John Mansel, one of his clerks. Henry was relying on a Papal provision which had been granted to him, but it seems<sup>1</sup> that, on a former occasion, in a dispute of this nature, Grosseteste had obtained a privilege from the Holy See whereby he was empowered to disregard any subsequent Papal provision which did not contain a special clause derogating from his privilege. As there was no such special reference in the Papal provision pleaded by the King, Grosseteste at once threatened Mansel with excommunication. Mansel being, as it seems, a man of peace, resigned his benefice ; and the Bishop over-weary of royal interference, seriously contemplated his own resignation and exile. The King, however, gave way, and the affair was compromised.

In 1242, Henry imposed severe exactions upon the country in order to prosecute his foolish war with France, then under St. Louis IX. Grosseteste vehemently exhorted his Chapter to make a common

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Paris, vol. i. p. 374. Bohn's Edition.



stand with himself against the King, who is probably referred to in the purposely ambiguous language of his letter.

In 1243 occurred the famous contest between the Bishop and the Chapter of Canterbury. Truly if the life of man is one of storm, that of Grosseteste was one of hurricane. The said Chapter during the long vacancy of five years claimed metropolitical power, and undertook to receive appeals from the provinces. The validity of their claim is discussed in Note B.

A clerk, whose name does not appear, sued the Abbot of Bardney, in Lincolnshire, for the recovery of a debt. The Abbot disputed the debt, upon which the clerk appealed to the Archdeacon, who seconded him in applying to Grosseteste to enforce the claim. The Bishop sent lay visitors to the monastery for this purpose, but the monks shut the door in their faces, and stoutly defied the Bishop's right to interfere. Grosseteste would certainly seem to be within his rights: his prudence and tact do not seem quite so clear. The Abbot, hearing of the claim of the Canterbury Chapter, appealed to them. At this juncture of events the King, recognizing the validity of the sentence of deposition which was now pronounced by Grosseteste, proceeded to seize the temporalities of the vacant abbacy, upon which the Bishop turned round upon the King and threatened him with the fate of Ozah, who perished for touching the ark.<sup>1</sup> The Canterbury monks then proceeded solemnly to excommunicate the Bishop with bell, book, and candle. This only intensified the quarrel, the censure

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings vi. 7.



being received by Grosseteste with contempt. Eventually appeal was made to Innocent IV., who had just been elevated to the Papacy, and Innocent directed the monks to withdraw their excommunication, and sought a peaceable adjustment of the conflicting claims. Grosseteste, however, complained of the action of the Pope in directing the Canterbury monks to annul their sentence. It seemed to him as if the Pope thereby more or less gave colour to their preposterous claim. But Innocent's object was clearly to shelve an examination which would have required long delays, and settle matters by an exercise of his own unquestioned superior authority. The letter of Grosseteste to Cardinal Otho on this occasion is noteworthy.<sup>1</sup> He calls the episcopal dignity the greatest upon earth. The Pope himself, he says, is not more than a Bishop, although within the sphere of the episcopate he holds the very summit and the plenitude of power, from which plenitude the other Bishops receive what they possess. Here is proof positive that up to the age of sixty-eight Grosseteste is as orthodox in his faith and allegiance to the Holy See as can possibly be.

In 1244 a serious disturbance between the scholars and the Jews arose at Oxford.<sup>2</sup> Wood's quaint remark—*nescio an de usuris*—probably indicates the cause. Grosseteste took the scholars' part, though the precise mode of the settlement of the affair is uncertain. What is certain is that the Bishop, in what he

<sup>1</sup> No. cx. "Dignitas episcopalis est maxima qua Christus homo usus est in terris: qua nec majorem gestat apex papalis licet in hac locum obtineat *summi verticis* et plenitudinem potestatis: de qua plenitudine ceteri quod habent, recipiunt."

<sup>2</sup> Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses*, i. p. 233.

did, laid the foundation of the jurisdiction of the University. For we find that shortly afterwards the King issued a privilege to the Chancellor and University, recognizing and ordaining that for the future,

all clerical causes respecting loans given or received, or the taxation and letting of houses, or matters regarding food and clothing or any contract whatever of movable goods in the municipality or suburbs of Oxford should be decided in the Court of the Chancellor of the University, and the King's prohibition was not to be in force.

The year 1244 was one of perpetual friction between Grosseteste and the King. The interference of the latter with the filling up of the vacant sees of Winchester and Chichester, successfully resisted by the Bishop, and the royal demand for subsidy likewise refused by the Bishop's influence, may be found related in Luard's Preface.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible within our prescribed limits to enter into details of these transactions.

The next dispute, however, between Grosseteste and the King deserves particular attention. In 1246 the financial condition of the see of Canterbury was in a deplorable state: a great part of its debts arising out of the expenses attending the Translation of the relics of St. Thomas in 1220. Boniface, the Archbishop, appealed to the Pope in his distress, and was authorized to appropriate the revenues of the first year of all the benefices falling vacant during the next seven years in the city, diocese, and province of Canterbury, until the sum of ten thousand marks should have been collected. Boniface thereupon applied to Grosseteste for his help in procuring the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. lviii. seq.

money, a matter of great difficulty, for the demand was highly resented by the King and his subjects. Grosseteste at first refused to help the Archbishop. In epistle lxxxix,<sup>1</sup> in terms of the utmost respect and good-will, he begs to be excused from interference in the matter. He says that he would thereby offend his fellow-suffragans by acting independently of them, and make himself odious to his clergy, already overtaxed by Papal and royal exactions. However, shortly afterwards, perhaps in consequence of the King's strenuous opposition, we find Grosseteste acceding to the request of Boniface, upon which Henry was forced once more to give way through fear of the sturdy Bishop.

Almost at the same time Pope Innocent himself was compelled to demand a subsidy. Upon this particular point we defer for the present any commentary. Later on will be seen an apology for the Holy See in this and similar appeals to the English purse. Once more the King was enraged beyond measure, and wrote to each Bishop peremptory orders forbidding them to levy the "tallage,"<sup>2</sup> as it was called. The reply of Grosseteste to the King is memorable, and gives us proof positive, that at any rate six years before his death his loyalty to the Holy See is unimpaired. The great change in the Popery of the Bishop, as alleged by Canon Perry, is yet to be. We quote from the Bishop's letter :<sup>3</sup>

The Bishops are bound to collect the tallage [he writes], for they as well as I myself are compelled by the authority

<sup>1</sup> Luard, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> Derived from an obsolete French word, *tailage* or tax.

<sup>3</sup> Letter cxix. Luard, p. 341.

and precepts of the Sovereign Pontiff, whom not to obey "is the sin of witchcraft," in whose wish not to acquiesce is like the "crime of idolatry."<sup>1</sup> . . . For we see our spiritual father and mother,<sup>2</sup> to whom we are bound incomparably more than to our parents in the flesh—by way of honour, obedience, and reverence and every kind of relief in their necessities—relegated to exile, persecuted, despoiled, and deprived of wherewith to be sustained according to their state.

He goes on to threaten the King with the evils that are sure to fall upon the kingdom, unless they succour the "spiritual father of all upon earth." Once more the King is foiled and Holy Church triumphs under the leadership of "Lincolniensis."

In 1248 we find Grosseteste present in the Parliament convened in London for the real, though not expressed, purpose of obtaining supplies for the King's impoverished condition.

The Parliament refused to comply with the King's demand for the present. It would seem that for three or four years the royal subsidies remained in abeyance. In October, 1252, the King produced a Papal mandate, authorizing him to receive for three years an entire tenth of the revenues of the Church in England to provide for the necessities of the royal pilgrimage to the Holy Land under the banner of the Cross. According to Matthew Paris, and, as far as can be seen, to no other author, Grosseteste protested against this demand of Pope and King, even whilst some of the prelates were inclined to give way. The ground of Grosseteste's objection was that the exaction was excessive, and would

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xv. 23.

<sup>2</sup> By these words, which occur frequently in the Bishop's letters, he means the Pope and the Roman Church.

become a dangerous precedent. Whilst refusing to give credence to the exaggerated account of Paris, it is probably true that the Bishops, with Grosseteste as their guiding spirit, at first refused compliance. We see no reason why they should not have done so, nor what point is gained by our opponents in such an admission. Eventually, however, the Bishops met in council and offered to come to terms with the King. They proposed to concede the grant of money on condition that he would keep inviolate Magna Charta. Besides which he was to grant a charter undertaking that this exaction should not be used as a precedent, and that the money should be applied *bona fide* to the exact purpose for which it was demanded. The King swore that he would not submit to such slavery, whereupon the Council and Parliament broke up with the matter unsettled.

In May of the next year, 1253, another Parliament was held in which, at the instance chiefly of Grosseteste, the King was forced to submit to the terms offered him; and once more the royal arbitrariness was kept at bay. And what does the weary recurrence of friction between mitre and crown prove? What would have been the history of the English people all along the line of Norman, Angevin, and Plantagenet Kings—sad enough as it is—without the benign and effective power of Holy Church to roll back the ever-recurring tide of arbitrary and despotic kinghood? What was it that made the tyrant Tudor possible, but the gradual withdrawal, by the Black Death, Lollard fanaticism, and civil wars, of the restraining power of the Catholic Church? The yoke of Jesus Christ was cast off, and exchanged for the

yoke of Cæsar. When will mankind learn the lesson that a yoke of some kind they cannot escape? It must be either that of Christ "which is sweet,"<sup>1</sup> or else that of Cæsar: unless indeed it be that of Demos, more terrible still.

We have no space here to narrate in detail the different acts of Grosseteste in the administration of his diocese. It will be sufficient to state that he was chiefly occupied in making visitations<sup>2</sup> with his characteristic thoroughness and severity: that in consequence he was in perpetual conflict with Chapter and beneficed clergyman, with abbot and prior, with monk and nun. Indeed, so frequent were the complaints about the conduct of "the terrible" Bishop, that Luard<sup>3</sup> is obliged to remark several times in his Preface that he cannot acquit him of hastiness, intemperate zeal, and lack of judgment in many of his transactions; whilst Matthew Paris, in support of the rights of monasteries, occasionally pours forth the vials of his wrath upon him.

It only remains for us to give an account of the dealings of our good Bishop with the Holy See. We have reserved this part of our history to the conclusion of our tract, because it is of supreme importance, as determining mainly the estimate we shall have finally to make of the character and orthodoxy of Robert Grosseteste. We shall confine our attention almost entirely to the letters of the Bishop

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xi. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, of Godstow, where the Abbess is deposed *propter culpas suas*: of Dunstable and Caudwell, where the Priors were likewise degraded: of Oxford, Lichfield, and Coventry, &c. (Luard, Preface, pp. lxix. seq.) At Ramsey he inspected the dormitories, "forcing open anything that was shut." (*Ibid.* p. lxxv.)

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, pp. lxxi. lxxv. See also p. xlvi.

as the incontestable sources of evidence ; whilst, for reasons already stated, we discard in great measure the biassed and indeed fabulous narrative of Matthew Paris.

First, let us see from the said letters what was the faith of Grosseteste from the beginning *to the end of his life* as regards the See of Rome.

The first reference made to that See is in a letter<sup>1</sup> written to William de Raleigh, treasurer of Exeter in the year 1236 : *i.e.*, in the sixty-second year of his age, and the first of his episcopate.

The princes of this world [writes the Bishop] ought to know that either sword,<sup>2</sup> the temporal as well as the spiritual, is the sword of Peter. But it is the Heads of the Church, who occupy the place and office of Peter, who of themselves use the spiritual sword ; it is the same Heads of the Church who use the material sword by the hand and ministry of secular princes ; who ought to unsheath or sheath it according to the design and disposition of ecclesiastical chiefs.

In epistle xxix. of the same year Grosseteste writes to King Henry to say that the Pope has taken under his protection the Crusaders, and has commanded the Archbishops and Bishops likewise to befriend them ; and threatens with punishment those

<sup>1</sup> No. xxiii. Luard, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> The Bishop here uses the famous similitude of the two swords, as St. Anselm did before him (*Comm. in Matth.* c. xxvi.), and as Boniface VIII. did in the Bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302), which has given such widespread offence. The first sword is the spiritual power, the second sword is the material power, to be drawn in support of the spiritual power. The spiritual sword is drawn by the Church, the civil sword *directly* by the State, but *indirectly* by the Church, when she calls upon the State to draw it in her interests, as she has the right to do. For the temporal authority, though perfectly distinct from it, yet must be subject to the spiritual authority ; because the spiritual order is of its very nature superior to the temporal, as the soul is to the body. If it could be shown that the Pope anywhere asserted as his prerogative, direct power over the



prelates who disobey the Papal command. Therefore, to avoid the charge of negligence and disobedience, he begs the King to release from prison Richard Syward, the Crusader. To this letter the same date may be assigned.

In letter xxxv.,<sup>1</sup> written to Pope Gregory IX. (date uncertain) we find expressions of extraordinary devotion.

Although [he writes] from the general debt of subjection, by which not only the entire Christian people but the whole human race is bound, and without the payment of which no one can gain salvation, I also am a debtor to your most holy paternity: yet the special prerogative of your virtues and the singular refulgence of them stimulates me intensely and strongly urges me to show forth the plenitude of obedience, of reverence, honour, and fear, &c.

At the end of the letter he asks for some bodily task by which he may prove his devotion.

Epistle xlix.<sup>2</sup> is of special value for our history, for it shows how Grosseteste thought it proper to act when a Papal legate proposed to supersede his episcopal rights. Otho, the Cardinal Legate, had appointed his own clerk, Atto, to the prebend at Lincoln, which had been previously held by Warminster. Grosseteste not unnaturally found this appointment most objectionable—first, because he had himself filled up the vacancy before Otho's letters reached him; secondly, because of the interference with his rights as patron of the benefice.

temporal order, then offence might justly be taken. But nowhere has the Pope done this. It should be remembered that the claim of Boniface had its origin in the public law then in force. See Hergenröther's *Church and State*, vol. ii. p. 120. English Translation.

<sup>1</sup> Luard, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 144.

But, in writing back, he has no thought of resisting, and even acknowledges expressly that "the Pope and the Holy Roman Church have power freely to dispose of all ecclesiastical benefices." What he claims is only the right to protest against a use of this supreme power, which he says "tends to the destruction rather than to the edification of the Church." And he finishes by "asking suppliantly, and prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, that in your kindness you will revoke the appointment to this prebend."

In letter lviii., addressed to Gregory IX. (1238), we find the same loyalty to the Holy See, with an earnest request that the Pope will not suffer the light of the Franciscan Order to be extinguished. Another letter, No. lviii., to the same Pope, is in a similar strain. (1238.)

Letter cxxvii. is one of great importance. It is in reality a pamphlet, written in 1239, to his Chapter at the beginning of the quarrel which, as we have seen, lasted so long a time. We have already called attention to its intensely Scriptural character. Moses, he writes, was advised by Jethro to appoint assistants in his work, but he did not thereby give up or diminish his power, but reserved to himself the more important cases.<sup>1</sup> The same is true of prelates: and prelates only can deal with the whole diocese or Chapter if they go wrong. Further, as the prelates are to their Chapter and diocese, so is the Pope to the prelates. As is each Bishop to his diocese, so is the Pope to the whole Church. Special exemptions may be given by the Pope to rural deans, abbots, chapters, &c., but

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xviii. 13, seq. ; Numbers xi. 1, seq.

where an exemption has not been given, as is the case with the Lincoln Chapter, then that Chapter must be subject to the Bishop's visitation: and the Bishop cannot diminish his own powers, neither can the Pope his own. This is shown in various passages of Scripture,<sup>1</sup> in which the Bishop's duty to his flock is laid down, and threats are quoted to neglect on their part. Now this duty cannot be done without visitation. The parish priests are *visores*, i.e., continually resident, and eye-witnesses of their flock. The Bishops alone are *visitatores*, or itinerant and special shepherds of the flock. The Dean is always resident, and therefore is only a *visor* not *visitor*. The *visores*, or pastors, are stimulated to zeal by the fact of their being visited by the Bishops. So St. Bernard writes,<sup>2</sup> and many other examples of Holy Scripture prove.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible within our limits to analyze the entire letter. Enough is here set forth to supply complete evidence of the exalted ideas of Papal prerogative and his own duty of reverence and obedience, which pervaded the mind of Grosseteste up to his sixty-fifth year.

In letters lxxvii. to Pope Gregory, lxxx. to S. de Arden, his proctor at the Roman court, and lxxxi. again to the Pope (all of 1239), which were written during the progress of his contention with his Chapter, there are to be found fervid protestations of his utter dependence on the Pope, "whose health,"

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. xxxiii. 19—24; Exodus xxix. 44; Jerem. xi. 1—4; St. John x. 12; Jerem. xxiii. 1, 2; Jerem. xxiii. 2; Ezech. xxxiv. 4, 16, and 11, 12, 15, 17; Isaias x. 15, &c.

<sup>2</sup> St. Bernard, *De Officio Episcoporum*, 35, opp. i. col. 1127.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., The parable of the Prodigal Son: David, Samuel, Adam and Eve, Abel, Abraham, &c.

he thus concludes, "may the most High preserve for me and the Church for a long time."<sup>1</sup>

We have now arrived at the year 1243 and the Pontificate of Innocent IV. (1241—54.) To him in letter cxi., Grosseteste writes fervent congratulations and requests for help in his sufferings with his Chapter. We must bear this letter in mind because we shall presently have occasion to compare it with the famous letter cxxviii. for the purpose of showing the difference of style between a letter of the Bishop to the Pope, and one to his notary.

Letter cxvii., to Innocent IV., written in 1245, is of special importance. This year, be it remembered, is the tenth of Grosseteste's episcopate, and the eighth before his death. We give the literal translation of the greater part of this notable document. The inscription is as follows :

*To our most holy Father and Lord in Christ, Innocent, by the grace of God Supreme Pontiff, his own devoted Robert, by the Divine pity the humble minister of the Church of Lincoln, with most devout kisses of his blessed feet.*

After my return to England, I met our Lord the King returning from the districts of Wales : and in a private conversation with him, whilst, among other things, I said, as well as I could, certain persuasive words about obedience, fidelity, and devotion to your Holiness and the Holy Roman Church—to be shown and observed and firmly and constantly maintained, especially now, when some people are trying, but by the help of God in vain, to attempt some disturbance of the prevailing tranquillity—the King replied to me thus : "My Lord Bishop, those things which belong to the crown and our royalty we intend, as indeed we ought, to preserve inviolate :<sup>2</sup> and we desire that our lord the Pope and the Church may help us so to do : and take

<sup>1</sup> Luard, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> See above, note, p. 27.

it for certain, that, altogether and at all times, we will show and observe obedience, fidelity, and devotion to our lord the Pope, as our spiritual father, and to the holy Roman Church, as our mother. . . .”

This reply of my lord the King I have thought fit to send to your Holiness, that it may plainly appear to you, what devotion the said lord bears towards you and the Roman Church. May the most High (Lord) of the Church maintain your health for many a day.

There can be no question then, that at this period, which it is to be remembered is the seventieth year of the Bishop's life, his devotion to the Chair of Peter leaves nothing to be desired.

In the following year, 1246, we have still more striking evidence of the same devotion. In letter cxix., Grosseteste writes to the King, to justify his action in the matter of the tallage imposed by the Pope upon the clergy. Henry is astonished that Grosseteste himself proposes to collect the tallage. Grosseteste replies thus :

Be it known to you that we do nothing in this matter of ourselves, *i.e.*, by our own authority, nor independently ; for our venerable brethren in the episcopacy are doing the same thing ; according to the form given to them by Master Martin, the nuncio of our lord the Pope : and both they and I are compelled by the authority of the supreme Pontiff, whom not to obey is like the sin of witchcraft and like the crime of idolatry.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore not to be wondered at that we, the bishops, are acting thus in the matter. But it would be most worthy of the utmost astonishment and indignation if we refused to do so much or even more. For we see our spiritual father and mother to whom we are bound incomparably more than to our parents according to the flesh, to render honour, obedience, reverence, and help of all kinds

<sup>1</sup> Luard, p. 340.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xv. 23.

in their necessities, relegated to exile, distressed by persecutions and troubles from every quarter, despoiled of their patrimony, and without means of their own whereby to obtain proper sustenance. If then, to these our spiritual parents in such circumstances we do not give help, it is certain that we transgress the commandments of God concerning the honour due to parents, nor shall we be long-lived in the land.<sup>1</sup>

With reference to the action of Grosseteste in this matter, Dom Wallace writes :<sup>2</sup>

Men like St. Edmund and Bishop Grosseteste, unworldly men, with singleness of view, having at heart only the glory of God and salvation of souls, were prepared to make any sacrifice on behalf of the common father of Christendom, in the straits to which he was reduced.<sup>3</sup> . . . St. Edmund himself cheerfully paid whatever demands were made upon him by the Holy See without murmur or remonstrance.

We now come to the famous letter cxxviii.,<sup>4</sup> which alone, as Luard remarks, has kept the memory of Grosseteste green in the English mind and memory. It is represented by Luard and almost all authors as written to Innocent IV. We shall see shortly that it was not so. The circumstances which led to its composition were as follows.

Innocent IV., in a letter dated Perugia, January 26, 1253 (nine months before the death of Grosseteste), ordered the Bishop to induct the Pope's nephew, Frederick of Lavagna, into a canonry at Lincoln, by provision, any exemption or privilege of the Church of Lincoln notwithstanding. Grosseteste peremptorily refused, and wrote the famous letter under considera-

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xx. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Edmund of Canterbury*, p. 313.

<sup>3</sup> What those straits were, see *ibid.* p. 314.

<sup>4</sup> Luard, *Letters of Grosseteste*, p. 432; and *Burton Annals*, p. 311.

tion, which by its outspoken defiance of the Holy See plainly shows, according to Canon Perry, that the mind of the Bishop was radically altered in its allegiance to Rome.

We will give at considerable length the contents of this letter. First, let us notice its title. This, as it stands in the pages of Luard, is not easy to translate.<sup>1</sup> It is as follows: "*Robertus Lincolnensis episcopus magistro Innocentio domino Papæ salutem et benedictionem*—Robert, Bishop of Lincoln, to Master Innocent, the Lord Pope, health and benediction." In a note<sup>2</sup> Luard writes: This letter is usually preceded by another commencing:

Robert by the permission of God, bishop of Lincoln to the Archdeacon of Canterbury and master Innocent the Notary of our Lord the Pope health and benediction.

If we turn to the *Burton Annals*<sup>3</sup> we find that this is also the true title of the letter we are considering. How then are we to account for the untranslatable Latin title which is given above, and is always prefixed to this letter? How, indeed, except that the force and sting of this letter would be greatly impaired, if it appeared as it really is, to be not a letter to the Pope at all, but to Innocent, the Pope's Notary! We cannot but think that Luard has failed in his usual impartiality here. Dr. Creighton too, notwithstanding his great reputation, falls into the same mistake. It is indeed difficult to acquit these writers entirely of

<sup>1</sup> For we cannot suppose that Grosseteste addressed Innocent IV. as Master Innocent.

<sup>2</sup> Luard, p. 432.

<sup>3</sup> Rolls Series, p. 311.



want of proper care. For if we refer to the *Burton Annals* we read:<sup>1</sup>

In the same year (*i.e.* 1253) there having been given certain provisors by the Apostolic authority, *viz.*, the Archdeacon of Canterbury (Hugo De mortuo Mari) and a certain Roman, *by name Innocent*, to provide for a certain Roman youth the first vacant prebend in the cathedral Church of Lincoln: Robert, our lord and master, bishop of the same place, on the receipt of letters executory in this same business from the said (provisors), wrote *to them* in these words.

Then follows the letter cxxviii. with the introduction given in English on the preceding page of this tract, with the addition of the following:

We have understood that you have received letters from our lord the Pope to this effect: "Innocent, Bishop, &c., to our beloved sons in Christ, the Archdeacon of Canterbury and master Innocent our secretary, dwelling for the present in England, health," &c.

The letter then proceeds as we have it in Luard's Epistles of Grosseteste. The *Burton Annals* go on to tell us that the Archdeacon and Innocent sent at once the Bishop's letter to Innocent IV. It was not unnatural that they should do this, but there is not a word in the letter directing them to do it. With these facts before us, why do Mr. Luard, Dr. Creighton, and all non-Catholic authors, style this a letter of Grosseteste to the Pope? One would have thought that a scholar of very moderate pretensions would have been aware of the fact, that no suffragan Bishop would dream of sending "health and benediction" to the Sovereign Pontiff, nor even to his Metropolitan or brother suffragans. The reader's attention has

<sup>1</sup> P. 311, Luard's Edit. . Rolls Series,

already been drawn to the language of Grosseteste when really addressed to the Pope. See letters cxi. and cxvii.<sup>1</sup>

This fact, that letter cxxviii. is written to the Papal notary and not to the Pope, nor meant, so far as we can see, for the eye of the Pope, removes much of the sting of the Protestant indictment. Father Rickaby, S.J., in *The Month* of August, 1880, pertinently remarks, that a Bishop writing to a notary might well enough pen words that he would not dream of sending to the Pope.

And now, when we come to examine the contents of the letter, we shall be surprised to find that instead of curses it contains blessings. We venture to remark that nowhere does Grosseteste show livelier faith and allegiance to the Holy See.

You know [he writes] that I obey the Apostolic commands with filial affection and all devotion and reverence; and those things which are adverse to Apostolic commands, being zealous for the parental honour [of the Holy See], I oppose or withstand; being bound to obedience or opposition equally by Divine command. For Apostolic commands are not, nor can be, anything else but consonant to the doctrine of the Apostles and of Jesus Christ our Lord Himself, the Master and Lord of Apostles, whose type and person our Lord the Pope in the highest degree represents in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. For our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says: "He that is not with Me is against Me;" but against Him the most Divine sanctity of the Apostolic See neither is nor can be. The tenor of the above-mentioned letter is not consistent with Apostolic sanctity, but quite the reverse.<sup>2</sup> In the first place, in the letter, and

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Luard justly observes that the style of this letter is scarcely equal to its fame. It is almost impossible to give the exact English equivalent of its more turgid and intemperate passages.

in others like it spread widely abroad, the “notwithstandings” (*non obstante*) which are heaped up in such vast quantity, being not drawn from any necessity in observing the law of nature, produce a wide deluge of fickleness, audacity, and shameless insolence of lying and deceiving, a distrust in believing or giving faith to anybody, and all the vices which follow from those things which are innumerable, disturbing and confusing the purity of religion and the social intercourse of men. Moreover, after the sin of Lucifer, the same with that of Antichrist, the Son of Perdition in the latter times, whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of His mouth (2 Thess. ii. 8), there neither is, nor can be, any sort of sin so adverse and contrary to Apostolic and Evangelical teaching, so odious and detestable to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, so abominable and destructive to the human race as to kill and destroy, by robbing them of the pastoral office and ministry, those souls which are to be vivified and saved by the office and ministry of the pastoral care. . . .

He goes on to say that the sin of those who send such unworthy ecclesiastics is greater than that of those who are sent, referring of course to the Sovereign Pontiff, and concludes as follows :

No one who is subject to the Apostolic See, and faithful in immaculate and sincere obedience, and not cut off from the Body of Christ and the same Holy See by schism, can obey commands, or precepts, or attempts of any description of such a character as this, from whatever quarter they come, even if it should be from the highest order of angels, but must of necessity contradict and rebel against them with all his strength. Therefore, reverend sirs, out of the debt of obedience and fidelity by which I am bound to the Most Holy Apostolic See, as to both my parents and by the love of union with it in the Body of Christ, these things which are contained in the said letter, because they most evidently tend to the sin which I have mentioned, are most abominable to our Lord Jesus Christ, and most pernicious to the human race, and are altogether opposed to the holiness of

the Apostolic See, and are contrary to Catholic unity, I filially and obediently disobey, contradict, and rebel against. Nor can your wisdom institute harsh measures against me, because every word and action of mine in the matter is neither contradiction nor rebellion: but filial honour due by Divine command to my (spiritual) father and mother.<sup>1</sup>

Such are the salient points of this letter, upon which non-Catholics are wont almost entirely to rely in their endeavour to prove the Protestantism of Grosseteste.

It is usually stated, though solely on the authority of Matthew Paris, that Innocent IV. was furious on the receipt of this letter from the notary, burst out into intemperate language, and was only prevented by the Cardinals from at once placing Grosseteste under excommunication. Other writers affirm that he actually did so. But Luard says that he can find no authority for the fact;<sup>2</sup> and we need not trouble ourselves about the highly-coloured story of Matthew Paris. Doubtless the Pope was displeased; but he knew very well his man, and loved and respected him, and actually ordered the vehement protests of the Bishop to be read aloud in a consistory of Cardinals.<sup>3</sup>

Neither need we be concerned with the ordinary account of the Bishop's death, in which he is made

<sup>1</sup> *Sed filialis divino mandato debita patri et matri honoratio*; which Canon Perry translates thus: "But the filial honour due to the Divine commandment as to (?) my parents." This is feebleness itself. It will be observed that Grosseteste throughout his letters is perpetually writing about his "spiritual father and mother," meaning thereby the Pope and the Roman Church.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to Epistles of Grosseteste, p. lxxxi. in note, where he gives his reason for discrediting the excommunication.

<sup>3</sup> Lingard, vol. ii. p. 248, note.

to pour forth violent complaints and accusations against the Holy See. Canon Perry has wrought this episode of Grosseteste's career into high relief. An illustration is given of the death-bed, and five or six pages are devoted to the last words of the dying prelate. He is made by the Canon to define the sin of heresy, and to convict the Pope of that sin, and to condemn him to everlasting flames.

The avarice, simony, usury, and cheating, the lustfulness, gluttony, vanity, and worldliness which reigned in the Papal Court were present in sad array to the thoughts of the Bishop. At last, worn out with his vehement protests, the voice and breath together ceased, the eloquent tongue was still, the zealous and earnest heart ceased to beat, and the great Bishop went to receive his reward.<sup>1</sup>

Let us hope that there were not wanting other thoughts to the dying man, such as those of contrition, and faith, and hope, wherewith to meet his particular judgment. However, as the Canon has taken every word from Matthew Paris, and from him alone, we need not trouble ourselves to make further comment upon them. So, also, as regards the famous ghost story, according to which Robert of Lincoln appeared to Innocent IV., when that Pontiff was thinking of casting the bones of the Bishop outside the church; and in which we are told that the ghost pummelled poor Innocent with the butt-end of his pastoral staff. Here, again, Paris is responsible for the story.<sup>2</sup> To all of this, and such as this, enlightened scholarship will give but sparse credence.

One epistle alone remains to be noticed, viz., that

<sup>1</sup> Perry, pp. 284—290.

<sup>2</sup> For further amusing embellishments see Dr. Milman's *Latin Christianity*, bk. x. ch. 5.

which is numbered cxxxi. in Luard's edition. In this document, the Bishop is represented as calling upon the nobles of England, the citizens of London, and the whole community "to resist with arms, the various oppressions, provisions, impositions of the Apostolic See."

Before dealing with the attitude towards the Holy See adopted by the writer of this letter, one would like to have some evidence that Grosseteste himself was the writer. This document is not found along with the other letters of Grosseteste, but comes to us from a wholly disconnected source. It is to be found in a bundle of other ancient letters in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. We have fortunately been able to secure the services of a friend who has recently examined the document. He reports that it occupies but one sheet of paper, is thrown casually among other miscellaneous writings, is not in the form of a letter at all, and has a title which is quite unique. Every letter of Grosseteste (that has been published, at any rate) has the prefix of "Robert, by the grace of God Bishop of Lincoln," or of words to that effect ; this letter alone is without it. It is styled *Lincolniensis proceribus Angliæ*. Till further research, if any is possible, has established the authorship of Grosseteste, we need not concern ourselves with any serious apology for it. At the most it is of a piece with other letters of the same kind, which do not affect Papal prerogative, but merely certain acts of Papal administration. Besides which, being written, according to Luard, in 1252, it is not the last expression of the mind and attitude of Grosseteste towards the Holy See.

What then is our final conclusion upon the various controversial points which have arisen in our short history of Robert Grosseteste?

I. As to foreign holders of benefices. Whence the universal condemnation of these, but either from ignorance or bigotry? In this indictment we include even Luard, notwithstanding his manifest and honourable attempts to avoid partiality and passion. For instance, on page xlvi. of his Preface, he writes thus :

The same year, 1240, is remarkable for the audacious attempt of the Pope to attach the Roman citizens to himself by giving them English benefices.

He then quotes Matthew Paris, who declares the number of such foreigners to be three hundred. If this be true, and here again Paris is our sole informant, we do not find any author whom we have consulted attempt to judge the matter from the Pope's point of view. Nor do we find any mention of a Bull of Innocent IV. in which he speaks of his great reluctance to impose such burdens on the people of England, but pleads his own distress as compelling him so to do.<sup>1</sup> We maintain that, in these days of enlightened historical research, we have a right to complain of such one-sided presentment of facts. The truth is, the Popes were not free in such matters. It must never be forgotten that the Pope is Supreme Head upon earth of the Catholic Church, that is to say, the Church gathered into one unity out of all nations. In this capacity he has the right, and sometimes the duty, to require one part of his flock

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins' *Concilia*, vol. i. p. 700; Rymer's *Fœdera*, vol. i. p. 471.



to bear the burdens of another. Now, at this period, the hostility of the German Emperor, the feuds of Guelph and Ghibelline, the consequent relaxation of morals and discipline, the impoverishment of Church endowments, the decrease in the offerings of the faithful—all these things had thrown upon the Pope's hands a multitude of starving ecclesiastics. Innocent IV. himself was an exile for ten years at Lyons, without any resources but contributions from the clergy. What then was he to do? Is it wonderful that he should have cast his eyes upon England, already a wealthy nation,<sup>1</sup> and called upon it to help him in his distress? If, beyond merely appealing, he also by his authority demanded, or even exacted relief, and used his supreme jurisdiction in the disposition of benefices, was he not acting within his rights? As regards subsidies demanded from the nation at large, as distinguished from the clergy, it must be remembered that, whether we approve of it or not, England had been made over as a fief to the Holy See, *by the express will of the barons*, as well as of the clergy and King John.

No one can justly blame the Pope for holding the English nation to their compact. Doubtless abuses arose both in the amount of the subsidies demanded, their mode of collection, and oftentimes in the number<sup>2</sup> and fitness of foreign ecclesiastics for tenure of English benefices. But abuses will arise, and cannot be avoided; and wherever Grosseteste

<sup>1</sup> That he was ignorant of the true financial condition of England is clear from the Burton Annals. (Rolls Series, second edition, p. 280.)

<sup>2</sup> For the statement that the incomes of foreigners in 1252 amounted to 70,000 marks, upon which so much stress is laid by Protestant authors, Matthew Paris alone is responsible.

opposed a genuine abuse, he was perfectly right in what he did, as we should be to-day in similar circumstances.

The Papacy [it has been well said] would not be the most tremendous burden upon earth, as indeed it is, if the Pope were divinely preserved from making a mistake in the conduct of his business, or committing a sin by the abuse of his power. Catholics are not bound to uphold every Papal act in history as wise, considerate, or even justifiable.<sup>1</sup>

But what is proved by resistance to an unjust Papal demand? Does it mean the denial of Papal right to make any demand? Does resistance to an unjust taxation involve the denial of the power of the State to impose taxes? or is resistance to unkind treatment on the part of a parent the same thing as the denial of parental authority? This confusion of thought runs through the pages of almost all non-Catholic historians, in particular those of Canon Perry, whose *Life of Grosseteste* is before us. He is simply throwing dust into the eyes of his Anglican readers. Let him show, if he can, one solitary instance where Grosseteste ever denied the Papal *prerogative* among his not infrequent acts of resistance to Papal *administration*.

II. We do not however justify every act of Grosseteste in his work of reform. The fact is that, as Luard frequently remarks, intense zeal for souls was not always tempered with discretion. His was a rugged and somewhat imperious nature. He was not distinguished for over-refinement, nor would patience be reckoned as his predominant virtue. The

<sup>1</sup> *The Month*, August, 1880.

maxim—"things will right themselves"—is about the very last he would acknowledge; and yet who that is versed in government does not recognize its wisdom in a variety of cases?<sup>1</sup> Contrast Grosseteste with his contemporary, St. Edmund of Canterbury. There was a mediæval saying upon this point: *Dilexit Dominus Edmundum in odorem benignitatis, et dilexit Dominus Robertum in odorem fidelitatis*—"The Lord hath loved Edmund for an odour of sweetness, and Robert for an odour of fidelity." St. Edmund was raised to the altars of the Church, and Grosseteste was not. May it not be that there was wanting to the latter that patient endurance of evils which cannot be remedied, that toleration of wrongs which cannot be redressed; that spirit of, *In Te Domine speravi: non confundar in æternum*; that absolute unconsciousness of being necessary, or, indeed, of any consequence to the welfare of Holy Church; in short, that utter effacement of self which distinguishes the Saint from the holy Bishop?

III. As regards the excommunication of Grosseteste, we have already shown that Luard denies it. But, as Dr. Felten remarks on this point, is it not quite certain that Matthew Paris would be sure to pounce upon the fact, and turn it to his own anti-Papal partisanship, if it had been true? whereas Paris makes no mention whatever of it.<sup>2</sup>

Again, the Primate with two other Bishops, several abbots, and an immense multitude of the faithful,

<sup>1</sup> See this point very well put by Miss Allies: *History of the Church in England*, pp. 231, seq.

<sup>2</sup> Collier (*Church History*, vol. ii. p. 509) refers to the Annals of Lanercost for the excommunication, and seems to connect Matthew Paris with the statement. But Matthew Paris has not a word about it.

assisted at Grosseteste's funeral; and the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's in the year 1307, petitioned his canonization.<sup>1</sup> These facts are irreconcilable with his excommunication.

IV. As regards the famous letter cxxviii., we finally remark as follows:

(i.) It is the very last expression of the mind of Grosseteste about the Holy See; being written in the spring of 1253, a few months before his death, which fell on October 9 of that year. Luard, in his article upon Grosseteste in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, affirms that, "this letter expresses the utmost reverence for the Pope and the Roman See." We say rather that something more than mere reverence is manifested by it; that the argument which pervades the letter, is the most absolute demonstration of his consummate faith. He says that this proposed appointment by the Pope of his nephew to the Lincoln canonry is an unrighteous one; therefore it does not come from the Apostolic See, *which cannot, as such, do unrighteous acts*. And considering the irritation of the Bishop as he penned this epistle, we cannot conceive or desire stronger proof of his Papal orthodoxy. To say then with Canon Perry that this letter is an evidence of the Bishop's change of mind and faith in Rome is about as true as that yes is no, or that light is darkness. But once more: *fas est et ab hoste doceri*. Luard in his Preface to the Epistles of Grosseteste writes thus:<sup>2</sup>

Grosseteste has been styled one of the harbingers of the Reformation. . . . If this implies that he had any tendency towards the doctrinal changes then brought about in the

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins' *Concilia*, vol. ii. p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> P. xiv.

Church, or that he evidenced any idea of a separation of the Church of England from that of Rome, a more utterly mistaken statement has never been made. . . .

To judge him by the ideas prevalent in the sixteenth century, or to expect to find him influenced by similar motives to those which were influencing men's minds then, is to do him great injustice : and such a view of his character can only arise from ignorance of the actual facts.

(ii.) The absurd blunder, by which Innocent the Notary is confounded with Innocent the Pope, has been pointed out. Therefore this famous Epistle of Grosseteste to Innocent IV. is a myth, and must never do duty again among scholars.

V. Not only by words or letters, but by acts all through his life, did Grosseteste proclaim his Papal allegiance. He made two painful seven-weeks' journeys to the Pope's presence—the second when he was an old man of seventy-five and over. Further, in his differences with the Canterbury monks, with his own Chapter, and with Boniface of Canterbury, that is to say *three times*, he appealed to Rome. He exhorted Henry as we have seen to fidelity to Rome ; he championed the Papal subsidy. If this is not to uphold Papal Supremacy, we are at a loss to know what is.

And now, we think, that enough has been written to vindicate the Papal orthodoxy, from beginning to end, of our most holy, and zealous, and unmistakeably Catholic Bishop, Robert Grosseteste.

## NOTE A (see p. 141).

The controversy between Grosseteste and his Chapter is plainly a case of conflict between the *jus commune* (or *General Law*) of the Church (of which a remarkable revival took place in the twelfth century) and the old Norman and English "customs" which dated from a period before that revival. By the *jus commune* the Bishop had from earliest times the right to visit his Chapter; by the "customs" spoken of, certain exemptions from such visitation came to be attached to particular Chapters. This was due, it is supposed, to the fact that St. Osmund of Salisbury before his death gave to his Chapter a considerable amount of autonomy with which the Bishop was expected not to interfere. These privileges became extended to the other two great secular Cathedrals of York and Lincoln. By degrees these powers of self-government, extending to the vicars and prebendaries, were looked upon as a body of rights, and were vaguely known as "customs and liberties." Indeed, we are told by Henry Bradshaw in his memorandum to the *Liber Niger* of Lincoln, that the chapters thus constituted had granted to them immunities "by Bishop after Bishop, confirmed too by successive Popes, until by A.D. 1250, even the Bishop's ordinary duty of visitation had come to be looked upon as an intolerable infringement of the right of the Chapter."<sup>1</sup> There do not, however, seem to be any instances of Papal grants explicitly exempting the Chapters from visitation. Grosseteste stood upon the ground of the *jus commune*, and *potestas episcopalis*, which no Bishop could diminish, or renounce, or forfeit by neglect. He declares that the Pope could exempt anybody from visitation: which shows he thought that in this instance the Chapter could not plead such exemption. Grosseteste was evidently

<sup>1</sup> *Lincoln Cathedral Statutes*, p. 37, by Bradshaw and Wordsworth. Cambridge University Press, 1892.

in the whole transaction reviving his undoubted rights, while the Chapter was pleading the prescriptive force of "customs and liberties."

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NOTE B (see p. 146).

Before the Council of Trent, Primates or Archbishops had powers to suspend, inhibit, or excommunicate their suffragans. This was generally regarded as part of their ordinary jurisdiction.

A Chapter, when the see is vacant, succeeds to the ordinary power of episcopal jurisdiction (with certain reservations), and has power to inflict censures and to excommunicate. In this particular case the Chapter of Canterbury, the see being vacant, considered that, inheriting the ordinary jurisdictional power of the late Archbishop, they could like him excommunicate throughout the *province*. Grosseteste contended that, whilst this principle held true with regard to the Archbishop's own diocese, it did not extend to the archiepiscopal powers over his suffragans. He<sup>1</sup> distinguishes between the Archbishop as Bishop of his own see, and the same as Archon, or head of the Bishops. So far as we know, there is not any recorded instance of the recognition of this claim of the Canterbury Chapter by the Holy See, although its action in this very case shows that it treated it as not altogether impossible. Shelving, as has been explained, the controversy just then, the Pope preferred to use his own higher authority and supersede the Chapter's excommunication.

<sup>1</sup> Letter cxxvii., which is well worthy of attentive study.



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